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—*Nonconformist.*







“THE LIFE AND LIGHT  
OF MEN”

"The Life (the Living One) was the Light of men."—JOHN i. 4.

"The true Light, which lighteth every man, *was coming* into the world."—JOHN i. 9.

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*History*

# “THE LIFE AND LIGHT OF MEN”

An Essay

BY JOHN YOUNG, LL.D. (EDIN :)



ALEXANDER STRAHAN, PUBLISHER  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

1866

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## Dedication.

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TO

THE MODERATOR, MINISTERS, AND ELDERS

OF THE

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

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FATHERS AND BRETHREN,—

Some years ago, you are aware, I retired from the Ministry of Albion Chapel, and at the same time resigned my connexion with the United Presbyterian Church. The first had its meaning chiefly in the second. Had it been possible to have remained in the Church, I should never have relinquished the special charge, for the people to whom I ministered deserved everything at my hands, which was consistent with the obligations of an earlier and holier fidelity. But it was not possible. I had ceased to regard the articles of our faith in the light in which I once had seen them, and was unable to limit myself by the Confession and Formularies of the Church.

The ground of my resignation was not broadly proclaimed at the time, but was left to be inferred, as it very readily could be, and as, in point of fact, it was by all who knew the circumstances. I have ever since been thankful that I was hindered from prematurely thrusting on wider notice an affair of personal and private life. Had this been done, mischief might have followed, without real benefit in any important direction. At the same time, I have not been ignorant that a reticence, which being temporary, was justifiable, and even incumbent, all the circumstances considered, if persisted in, beyond the limits of the necessity, might deserve to be branded as cowardice and disloyalty to truth. I have also felt that something was due to you, and to the sacred relation in which, especially in the years of my pastorate, I stood to you, something to the cordial friendship, to which, now as before, I am admitted by valued ministers and members of the United Presbyterian Church, and something also to myself, to the position which I held, and to my personal truthfulness and integrity. The three inconsiderable volumes, bearing my name, which have been published in the last few years, were intended, amongst other purposes, to serve as a partial discharge of these obligations, and the work which I now dedicate to you, is a further instalment with the same motive and aim.

Thoroughly at one with the Churches called evangelical, in all that is really essential, I do not imagine that truth, and nothing but truth is with them, and *only* with them :



that they are all right, and all others all wrong. Can it be deemed presumptuous to suppose that there may be errors in our evangelical teaching, and grave dangers to which these errors are likely to lead? And has there never been cause to condemn, in our public action, as a party, manifest narrowness and bigotry, and still more—what has at least seemed to be disingenuousness and intolerance? But these and such things notwithstanding, the evidence to me is abundant that the divine spirit of Christianity is mightily working in the evangelical churches, and that the warmth and the living energy of true religion, piety towards God, and love towards man, and those holy central impulses which originate and sustain all the highest good that is done on earth, are to be found very largely in them.

Fathers and brethren! I was baptized, admitted to the holy communion, trained and educated in that church, of which you are the acknowledged heads. I think I understand the evangelical faith as maintained by you, and especially what, in these days, is considered its leading, testing article. I think I understand what is meant by the sacrifice of Christ, the atonement for sin (involving the idea of satisfaction to justice) through his blood. Certainly, I am much to blame, if I do not understand it. I have been most carefully instructed in it, from my earliest youth upward, in the family, from the pulpit, and from the chair of our Theological Hall. Its ground, its nature, its evidences, and its defences have long been familiar to me, and all my prepossessions, and prejudices, and associa-

tions, and circumstances national, educational, hereditary, ecclesiastical, and social, have been in favour of it. So far as an ordinary capacity can justify the claim, I may claim, without presumption, to understand this special tenet. I well know, besides, that by thousands of godly and devoted souls, this is regarded as the very life of their life, the ground of their well-being, and the one solitary hope of the whole world, a protecting shield also, thrown around the Almighty himself, and a sun which pours its glory on His perfections and His nature. They believe that from this source peace is shed into their hearts, that by this the sacred fire is supplied, which kindles them to purity and love, to heroic daring, and noble endurance, and that all their happiest thoughts of God, all their strongest motives to holy living, all their selectest moments of spiritual communion, and all their clearest visions of the eternal future, are derived from this. Were this to go, they believe that everything valuable and essential would perish with it.

I could not attempt to disturb, if such a thing were in my power, a faith like this, did I not believe, as I do, that all which is really essential in the common convictions would abide untouched ; that divine peace in the troubled heart of man would be even more secure ; that the pure, free grace of the Almighty, in the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ, away from all idea of human merit, would be more firmly established ; that the impression of the mercy of God, and of the dying love of

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the Redeemer of men, would be far deeper ; and that all the motives to holy living, and all the purest influences of the cross on Calvary, would be multiplied and intensified.

At the same time, and on the other hand, the unqualified admission is here made most gladly, that the doctrine of satisfaction, as usually taught among us, is often, very often, held in association with the most exalted piety and with the purest virtue. Judging by the limited experience of my life, I have never found, and I never expect to find, nobler examples of the true fear of God, of unbending moral principle and of generous, self-sacrificing devotion to the good of others, than in the evangelical churches. A "creed" so called, is but a small part of the true man, and the worst side of the professed creed, as I humbly presume to judge, is often unconsciously, but habitually kept down, while the best side almost entirely is left to exert its force upon the mind, and to form the character after the purest model of spiritual excellence. Multitudes in the past have found the seed of eternal life, in spite, as I venture to think, of rigorous and false conceptions of Christ's sacrifice, multitudes at this hour find, and multitudes in the time coming may yet find, through the same medium, the incorruptible germ of renewed being. It is not imagined by them, that living love of Christ and filial self-surrender to the redeeming, reconciling God in him, can ever be separated from such conceptions, and far less is it believed, that only when thus separated they are most pure, most noble, and least open to the possibility of abuse.

Fathers and brethren ! I have satisfied my mind that the conclusions put forth in this volume are substantially true, but I am very far from imagining that they are perfectly and wholly true. There are a few things to us men, sure and stable as the universe, or as the Great God himself. In principles, strictly so called, in all that we see to be eternal, immutable, universal, we can repose with the calm conviction of absolute truth. But wherever the positive element intrudes—and where does it not intrude?—the penalty of partial insecurity, and uncertainty, must be borne. In every so-called truth, as conceived and stated by any human being, there must always be the taint either of defect, or of error, or of both ; and conversely, in every so-called error, as taken up by any human being, there must always be some infusion of truth. The common proverb popularises without degrading, a principle which is of unlimited application, “one man’s poison is another man’s food,” that is, he is able to find in it some alimentary power, some particles which he can convert and assimilate to his own living substance. On the other hand, “one man’s food is another man’s poison,” that is, he finds in it what is so distasteful, that his physical system rejects it, and would render it destructive to the vital functions.

The nutritive, alimentary power for the spirit, as for the body, easily distinguished in the generality of cases, is yet subtle and mysterious, and may exist in very varying amount, and in most diverse and unlikely combinations. It does not belong to men, to determine for one another

where it may or may not be found sufficient to sustain soul-life, or in how many opposite forms, and in spite of what gross adulterations, it may be sifted out by the spiritual, as by the physical system, so as to support a real, though strange vitality. Truth, pure and simple, perfect on all sides, is only for the One Unerring Mind. Error, unmitigated and unmixed, can be only for the reprobate and refuse of our race. On this earth, constituted as we are, and in a state of confessed imperfection, we may anticipate knowledge, without defect, and without flaw; but it must be beyond and above, not here.

Fathers and brethren,

I am, with unfeigned respect and regard,

Yours faithfully,

JOHN YOUNG.





## P R E F A C E.

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THE structure and form of this work are due to necessity, rather than choice. The system of doctrine, the modes of thought, and the conventional phrases and terms, which are common, more or less, to all the evangelical churches, rendered a method of treatment adapted to these peculiarities unavoidable. It seemed imperative, that those whom, first of all, it was sought to influence should be met on their own ground, and through the use of their own selected forms of speech.

The favourite theological phraseology of an earlier period, and with it the scholastic, syste-

matic treatment of religious truth, have grown distasteful, are now often unintelligible, and certainly are quite unappreciated. Men of free and wide cultivation, and of liberal and generous tendencies, with no disrespect to the existing sectional distributions of Christianity, have learned to generalise, or rather to universalise, the principles and the spirit of the New Testament. Instead of attempting to set its manifold deliverances in exact logical order, and to compact them into a fixed system—a process essentially artificial, and always destitute of the smallest authority, save from the wisdom and the organising faculty of individual men—they have learned to take them just as they lie in the sacred writings, separate, scattered, without order and without method, imperishable seed, but sown broadcast, not in straight lines drilled with mechanical precision. They have sought, not to cut them sharply off, but to connect them with all ex-

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isting and concurrent truth wherever it may be discovered, and to look for their ground, not in the necessities and the niceties of any artificial system, but in the great wants of the world, in the essential truth of things, and in the eternal excellences of the Father of all souls. They have, moreover, sought to find the highest evidences of revealed truth, without in the least undervaluing other regions of proof, in the nature of man himself, in the law originally written in his soul, in those mysterious and holy intuitions, not yet erased, which reveal, if anything in the spiritual structure can reveal, the awful presence and voice of the Creator. Having thus emancipated themselves, as they believe, from human creeds, they stand far apart from those who are not only in chains, as they judge, but who love and exult in the bondage. Incapable of appreciating the difficulties which oppress others, they scarcely understand at all how such diffi-

culties should be felt, and are uninterested in the reasonings by which they may be removed or relieved. They occupy a totally different region, have no sympathy with what they deem narrow conceptions, and are offended by a phraseology which to them is uncouth, technical, artificial, and nearly unintelligible. But all the while, the so-called system of religious truth, logically arranged and compacted, remains a fact, make of it what we will, and demands to be dealt with on its own ground. §

It is common in these days to speak, not respectfully, of human creeds as such. They have had a long trial, sufficient, it is thought, to demonstrate what they are good for, and to make it now full time to decide conclusively, whether the amount of good outweighs the necessary attendant evil. Instead of servants ministering to the general convenience, and to the ready, accurate, and economical arrangement of knowledge and of thought, the creeds,

some allege, have grown into tyrants, wielding a sceptre of iron, sometimes glowing with furnace heat. Instead of adapting the creeds at successive periods to an advancing elevation and expansion of thought, it is conceived that the vain effort has been made to adjust the ever-growing mind of the world to their unchanged bulk and shape—just as if, in a library with its fixed lines of shelves, instead of altering the shelves to the size of the books, we should cut down the books to the measure of the shelves.

But the evangelical creed is not a thing to be named without deep respect, whether for its intrinsic character, or for the purposes it has served as a spiritual influence on the nations of Europe, and as a large educator of the popular mind. It has undoubtedly gained, and it has long preserved, a real, a deep, and an extended sway. Several of its chief points have been effectually drilled into the minds of

masses of the people, have moulded their thinking, and coloured their speech, and in part created for them a new vocabulary. It is a product on which the intelligence, the learning, the acuteness, the organising power, and the practical skill of many of the ablest and best endowed minds of Europe have been successively bestowed. It is unequalled for the vastness of its sweep : first of all, reaching back, (surely not without hazard of blasphemy,) to what is styled, "The Council of Eternity," to the absolute decrees of God issued by that council, and to the concerted plan for their gradual evolution in the course of the ages ; then, tracing the entire history of redemption in all its principles and methods, from the creation and the apostasy of man, on through the antediluvian, patriarchal, and Jewish eras, to the Incarnation and the Cross ; and then, stretching forward from these, beyond all the Christian ages, to the consummation, the last



judgment, and the life everlasting. It is a work of profound thought, and of severe elaboration, it is based on hard strong argument, it is constructed with rare logical ability and ingenuity, and will be found altogether most compact and skilfully arranged and consolidated. There may be gaps in the wall of enclosure which protects what is called *the* system of revealed truth, and these may be left to be filled up by individuals as they best can, but it is impossible not to marvel at the massiveness and the extent of the defences, and at the amount of labour, of skill, and of intellectual prowess and power which have been expended on them.

Some of the most holy and honoured men, Augustin and Anselm and Luther and Calvin, and multitudes hardly less distinguished, Catholic doctors, and later Protestant divines, as well as Waldensian, Bohemian, French, British, and other confessors, have had a share, more

or less, in this great work. It is not the creation of one age or one party, but a legacy handed down from all the ages, with their endless parties, almost every one having left its mark, more or less distinctly, upon it in its passage onward. Men of the most opposed opinions, some directly and others indirectly, have exercised an influence in its formation, and many who would not have accepted it as a whole, have nevertheless contributed to some of its details. It is properly an agglomerate, unique but most composite, here venerable for Catholic antiquity, there purely Protestant and again comparatively modern, receiving its latest modifications through Puritans, Covenanters, Methodists, and the various sections of the existing evangelical school.

The attempt would be simply absurd, to discuss a complex system within the limits of a small volume. But it may be possible, nevertheless, to discover and to examine care-

fully what constitutes, in these modern days, in the judgment of those who have adopted it, its central and vital distinction. Evangelical writers, preachers, and disciples, are in the habit, without exception, of narrowing the issue, and bringing the creed to a single test. That test is the doctrine of sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, the atonement made to God for human sin, the satisfaction rendered to Divine Justice by the shedding of Christ's blood. It is taught that Christ stood in the room of men, and endured the punishment which they deserved, and that God, on this ground, but only on this ground, is now able to set men free, and to receive them back to His favour. In modern evangelical speech, this is the gospel, the true gospel, the one, only gospel of God to the world; which accepting, a man is safe; which rejecting, he is eternally lost. That familiar phrase, "the gospel," always in the same fixed sense, is so constantly pro-

nounced from the press, from the pulpit, and in private society, that it is hardly possible to misapprehend it. Invariably one thing is meant, one thing chiefly, almost alone—the expiation of human sin by Christ's death, and the divine pardon, purchased by this costly means.

The following pages are devoted chiefly to a free consideration of this article, in several of its important bearings, and if there be found in them any closer approximation to truth, or any help to truth-seekers, the writer will have gained his best reward.

# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### INCARNATION—IN TWO SECTIONS.

*Section First.*—The Idea and the Fact:—Divine Response to the Soul's deepest Want—Its wide Relations—Incarnation and Miracles—Necessity of Anticipative Record—The Light of Secular History, . . . . . Pp. 3-19

*Section Second.*—Sacrifice in Incarnation:—God Self-sacrificing—Limitations of Human Medium—"Lamb of God"—Super-naturally Provided—God in Christ Unveiling Himself—Incarnate, Unknown, Rejected—Life Sacrificed—"According to Counsel of God"—A Prey to Rage and Lust of Men—Divine Self-sacrifice for Sin. . . . . Pp. 20-43

## CHAPTER II.

### HUMAN SIN—IN TWO SECTIONS.

*Section First.*—What Sin is, and the Sense of Sin:—Essential Distinction—Burden of Universe—Radical Difficulty in Speculation—Unrest in all Earnest Souls—Consciousness of Sin—Its Development—Legitimate Result, . . . . . Pp. 47-61

---

<i>Section Second.</i> —Redemption from Sin:—"Way of Salvation"— Adaptations and Subtlety—Ground of Forgiveness—Not Honouring to God—Sin, not Punishment, greatest Evil— Divine Self-sacrifice smites Root of Sin—Gradual and Final Redemption, . . . . .	Pp. 62-76
---	-----------

## CHAPTER III.

## SPIRITUAL LAWS.

Their Sphere—Material Laws—Not Eternal and not Necessary— Ordained by God—Spiritual Laws Immutable—In Harmony with Will of God—Their Ground—Human Laws—Need Vin- dication and Support—Self-sustaining Law—Sin and Death —Holiness and Life—Divine Sacrifice—Destroys Sin—Saves the Soul, . . . . .	Pp. 77-101
---	------------

## CHAPTER IV.

## ETERNAL JUSTICE.

Opposite Conceptions of Justice—Providence—Inequalities, Real Equality—Mere Justice—Not in God—A Human Notion— God always More and Better than Merely Just—Justice and Mercy—Evil, Not of God—Moral, Physical Evil—Ethical Nature of God and Man—Mercy Loftier, Holier than Justice —Inevitable Doom of Sin—Triumph of Mercy, Pp. 103-124
--

## CHAPTER V.

## ATONEMENT AND SATISFACTION—IN TWO SECTIONS.

<i>Section First.</i> —Imagined Necessity of Satisfaction:—1. Law—But Penalty inflicted—2. Justice—Never Defrauded—No Un- settled Claims—3. Moral Government—Not Dishonoured or Overthrown—Its Security, Divine Self-sacrifice, Pp. 127-142
--



*Section Second.*—Satisfaction for Sin not Possible:—1. The Fact of Sin; 2. Its Criminality; 3. Its Power for Evil Unchangeable—Sin Destroyed and Forgiven—Divine Anger—How Inappeasable—Anger and Love in Cross—Destruction of Sin in Soul—This, Salvation, . . . . . Pp. 143–157

## CHAPTER VI.

JUSTIFICATION AND IMPUTATION—IN TWO SECTIONS.

*Section First.*—Meaning of Terms:—Science of Theology and other Sciences—Essentially Different Ground—Theological Terms—Settled by Scripture—Words, “Justify,” &c.—Literal Sense—Righten, Set Right—Examples—Non-Natural Sense—Spirit of Man, Wrong—Needs to be Set Right—Proof Passages—Justification—Only Thrice, Used, . . . . . Pp. 161–182

*Section Second.*—Truths, Answering to Terms of Scripture:—Righteousness Rightness—State of Right-en-ed-ness—Rightening-ness—The Power, Act, Mode of Rightening—Imputation—Rightness Imputed because Real—Fact Recognised—Thing Reckoned, What it is, never, What it is not—Imputation Inevitable—Instinctive—Figures of Speech—Judicial Imputation, a Crime, . . . . . Pp. 183–203

## CHAPTER VII.

SACRIFICE.

Is God Essentially Self-sacrificing?—Lesson to Universe—Sacrificial Rite, Universal—Æsthetic Gradation—Contrary to Facts—Animal Sacrifices—Earliest Form of Offering—Taking of Animal Life, Revolting—In Name and by Command of God—1. Provision for Human Sustenance—2. Merciful Protection to Animal Creation—Sacredness of Life—Worship of Life—

- giver—Surrender back of His own—Virtual Self-surrender—  
 3. Silent Confession of Life Forfeited and of Sin—Early Revolting Corruptions of Sacrificial Rite, . Pp. 205-226

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MOSAIC ECONOMY—IN TWO SECTIONS.

- Section First.*—Its Chief Characteristic:—Religion of Blood—Endless Sacrifices—Rites Simplified and Purified—Appeal through Senses to Soul—Two Ideas—Human Sustenance and Divine Worship—Paschal Lamb, a Supper—Also, Act of Worship—No Idea of Expiation—How Blood, Atonement for Soul—Blood and Fat, God's Portion—Rest for Food—Kāphār, ἱλάσκομαι, Atonement—Not Expiation—Proof Passages, Pp. 229-251
- Section Second.*—Its True Meaning and Interpretation:—Visible Punishments and Rewards in Old Testament—Atonement for Life, not Soul—System of Discipline and of Worship—Not Scheme of Salvation—Training of Israelites—Old Testament, Record of Spiritual Truth—Special Privileges—Salvation always Common to World—Sacrifices never Ground of Pardon—“Purifying of Flesh”—No More—Anticipation of Death of Christ Impossible—“I, even I, am He that Blotteth out,” &c., . . . . . Pp. 252-279

## CHAPTER IX.

### SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

- Voluntary—“I lay down My Life”—Issue Foreseen, Willingly Encountered—Escape without Dishonour, Impossible—Men, Sole Agents in Crucifixion—Determinate Foreknowledge of God—Natural Course of Events—Wholly, a Human Crime—No Sacrifice by Men to God—No Divine, Judicial Arrange-

ment—Two Gods—Tri-unity Destroyed—Substitution, its Meaning—Figure, not Reality—Human Notions, transferred to Mind of God—Natural Sense of Scripture—Fictions taken for Facts—Perfect Love, in Death of Christ—Human Self-sacrifice—Noble and Ennobling—Ray from Heaven—Eternal Fountain of Pure Generosity—God's Sacrifice for Men—Conquers Soul, . . . . . Pp. 281-313

## CHAPTER X.

SACRIFICIAL TERMS AND ALLUSIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT—  
IN THREE SECTIONS.

*Section First.*—The Epistles :—Written by Jews—Addressed, First, to Jews—Jewish Phraseology and Imagery, Inevitable—Exposition of Passages—Beautiful, Natural Sense—Christ's Death, and Ancient Sacrifices—Epistle to Hebrews—Typical Language—Use and Abuse—Apostolic Gospel, . . . . . Pp. 317-348

*Section Second.*—Acts of the Apostles :—Early History of Christianity—First Christian Sermon—Peter's Gospel—Martyr Stephen—Ethiopian Eunuch—Cornelius—Saul of Tarsus, His Conversion, His Ministry—Antioch, Athens, Miletus, Philippi—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and Thou shalt be Saved, and Thy House," . . . . . Pp. 349-368

*Section Third.*—The Gospels :—Hostile Criticism—Unsound Basis—Sayings and Discourses of Jesus—How Preserved and Transmitted—Christ's Soul, their Fountain—Immeasurable Superiority—Early Christian Writings—Noblest Heathen Utterances—Exposition of Passages—No Expiation or Satisfaction—Must have been, if True—Lord's Prayer—Last Supper—Calvary—After Resurrection—Olivet—Christ's Teaching Opposed to Satisfaction—Pharisee and Publican—Prodigal,

Pp. 369-412

## CHAPTER XI.

## ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE DOCTRINE OF SATISFACTION—

## IN TWO SECTIONS.

*Section First.*—From the Apostolic Age to that of Anselm:—  
 Foundation in Human Nature—Ignorance and Fears—Early  
 Christian Writings—Repeat Language of New Testament—No  
 Independent Statement—Proof Passages—Dr Shedd's Admis-  
 sions—First Idea, Satisfaction to Satan—Irenæus—Origen—  
 Abuse of Figures the Original Root of Error—First Explicit  
 Statement—Athanasius—Augustin—Anselm, Pp. 415-462

*Section Second.*—From the Age of Anselm to the Present Time:—  
 Athanasius and Anselm—Second, Deeper Source of Error—  
 Pride of Reason—Intellectual Subtlety—False Philosophy—  
 Misapplication of Logic—Anselm's Tractate, Logical, not  
 Philosophical—Conclusion False—Thomas Aquinas—Luther  
 —Secret of his Power—Success of Evangelical Churches—  
 Calvin, Theologian of Reformation—Evangelical Transcen-  
 dentalism—Essential Relation of Divine to Human—God,  
 Father of Souls—Loving, Redeeming Father, Pp. 463-497

CONCLUSION, . . . . . Pp. 499-516

## CHAPTER I.

### INCARNATION.

SECTION FIRST.—THE IDEA AND THE FACT.

SECTION SECOND.—SACRIFICE IN INCARNATION.



## SECTION FIRST.

The Idea and the Fact—Divine Response to the Soul's deepest Want  
—Its wide Relations—Incarnation and Miracles—Necessity of  
Anticipative Record—The Light of Secular History.

LIFE and light belong to all languages—words of happy omen, and only of happy omen, to all peoples and times. Their very tone is stirring and sunny, and the things are brighter and more enkindling than the words which denote them. They are perhaps the very commonest, but they are also the most inscrutable of all our notions; the best understood, but also the least understood of all human things. A savage leaps with joy in the irrepressible consciousness of vigorous life, and amidst the warmth and beauty of noonday. But the severest student of nature, when he has pushed his researches to the farthest possible limit, is forced to acknowledge that life and light are each, to him, an unfathomable mystery. He has observed, arranged, and recorded the phenomena connected with both; he has discovered the laws which regulate the phenomena; he has even

measured the inconceivable speed with which light darts through space ; but what light is, and what life is, he cannot tell. The impenetrable secret abides, and the most gifted of our race, in presence of it, can only gaze in mute astonishment.

The relations of life and light are as well understood, but also as ill understood, as the things themselves. That they are connected—beautifully, essentially connected—is certain, and many of the forms of their connexion are familiar to us ; but how they are connected we know not. The root and ground of their relation, the middle point in which they meet, and from which they act and re-act, the one on the other, are undiscoverable. Life and light, like death and darkness, are associated indissolubly in thought, because they are associated constantly in fact. We cannot separate life from light, nor light from life, without an instant sense of incongruity and wrong. The one seems to be the true complement of the other, a real necessity to the other. In the lowest and in the highest modes of existence alike, both are essential, and the perfection of spiritual being is in the full, beautiful blending and interfusion of the two.

The wonderful proem to the fourth gospel overawes and startles us with sudden openings into the abysmal secret of life and light, and into their primal,



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eternal relations, with quick flashes, into the profound darkness, quenched almost as soon as they are struck out. "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God," essentially related to God, eternally connected and identified with God. "And the Logos was God." "In him (the Logos) was life"—no abstraction, no mere quality of being, but life—living, unoriginated, self-sustaining, self-perpetuative power. "And the life" (this living One) "was the light of men." "The true Light, which lighteth every man, *was coming* into the world"—at the fulness of the times, he was actually coming into the world. "He was in the world"—before this, he was, and from the first, he had always been in the world. "And the world was made by him"—the Eternal Logos reigned supreme in the creation and formation of all things. "And the world knew him not. But as many"—in all the ages, all along—"as received him"—recognised and admitted him into their hearts—they "became sons of God; born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." At last, in the fulness of the times, "the Logos was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."

The divine in man, the true inner life and light of

his soul, not a poetical exaggeration, but a sacred reality, is recognised by all theological schools. It is taught that the Great Father of the spirit, in its very nature and structure, has impressed His own likeness upon it, and left discoverable tokens of a spiritual, superhuman descent. Beyond this, the indwelling of God, at least in some human minds, and His direct action upon them, as a secret, illuminating, purifying, and guiding Spirit, are well understood points of the common faith. Manifestly it must be a question of degree, not of kind, how many or how few the tokens of alliance with the divine in any soul may be, or how far into the human in any case the divine element may penetrate. But the transition is immeasurable, from such connexion between the created and the creating Spirit, to the idea of Incarnation. Once, only once, in all time, it is believed, very God so entered into a human soul, so possessed and filled all its capacities, and so united and identified Himself with its being, that it was not, and never was, merely human, but always Divine-human, a true Incarnation, under no conditions, but those necessary ones which must always limit the finite, whether as a receptacle or as a manifestation of the infinite.

Jesus Christ was a true man, in all essential respects, like other men. His soul was a true human soul, endowed with all the ordinary susceptibilities,

tendencies, and powers of the common nature. Body and soul, he was man. That is a historical fact, which no fair criticism and no candid reasonings have yet touched. But it is believed that he was a divine man, the one, sole Incarnation of divinity that ever alighted on this earth. The fact, in all its profound meaning, is necessarily inexplicable, and the most wise and the most pious will be the farthest removed from presumptuous dogmatism on such a subject. The divine in man, in any sense, is mysterious, overwhelming, and, in its full truth, incomprehensible. But God-man, in the sense of Incarnation, is altogether so stupendous, that we can only bow down and worship in presence of a mystery which we are utterly unable to compass in thought.

At the same time, this at least is patent and indisputable, that there could be, in the Incarnate, no blending or confusing or interchanging of the divine and the human. The human could never be more than human; the divine could never be less than divine. The two natures must ever have been perfectly distinct; but from their incomprehensible union and interpenetration, their action and interaction, there resulted a real life on this earth such as had never otherwise been possible. Hence, in that life, sometimes the merely human and sometimes the properly divine is alone visible, and sometimes the manifesta-

tion is complex, so that we are unable to distinguish where the human terminates, and where the divine commences. But all in all, this is the sum, if we may dare to put it into words, that the human soul of Jesus Christ was so possessed and inhabited by very God, so pervaded, and interpenetrated, and guided, and moved by the divine, that he alone of all in human form could say, and, in a sense, whose full depth of meaning we cannot reach, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

I venture to suppose that too little is made of this central truth, and that much of its meaning and many of its very vital bearings are not understood, or not appreciated.

Amidst the blundering legends, and myths, and fables, and allegories, and designed fictions, with which all lands and all ages have abounded, and which have been largely accepted by an indiscriminating and a greedy credulity, there has been one, but there has been only one, true Incarnation. The miserable caricatures of the sacred reality, if they have done nothing else, have shown this at least, the hunger gnawing at the heart of the world, the irrepressible longing for the divine, and even the felt, mysterious affinity with the divine, which has so strangely craved and struggled for a nearer approximation, for something of an actual, literal fellowship and union. The

veiled shrine of Egypt, the sacred fire of Persia, the Avatars, and Grand Llamas, and Absorptions, and Nirvanas of Brahminism and Bhuddism, the Pythonic possessions, the Sibylline inspirations, and all the sacred mysteries of Greece and Rome, Popish transubstantiation and Mariolatry, the wild visions of Christian mystics, millennial vagaries, and all the ridiculous absurdities of modern spiritualism, utter one unmistakable voice. The want of the human soul in its deepest depths, through all ages, has been God, the living God. Unintelligently, wildly, grossly, madly the want may have been proclaimed, but at least its existence and its depth have been proved beyond all doubt. The sense of some unnatural estrangement and isolation, it knows not what, but as if its higher self had been cut off from it, has for ever burdened the spirit of man. In ten thousand various forms and ways, universal humanity has laboured to have some unknown severed link reattached, some secret, long closed communication opened up again. It has ever longed to come nearer to the divine, and to bring the divine nearer to it, to touch, as with its very hand, the Father above, and to be touched by Him, to look upon the very face of God, to hear the divine voice, and to communicate nearly and directly with the unseen.

Once for all, most mercifully and wondrously, a

response from above was given to the wild, vague, ill-understood, almost unconscious cravings of the human heart. "The Eternal Logos" took possession of a human soul in a human body, and made it the medium<sup>1</sup> through which influence from Above should flow down on the world.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the wide relations of this divine mystery. More or less it must touch everything which belongs to the sphere of revelation. Perhaps it is the real, though not the ostensible issue, even in some of the religious questions which are troubling the present age. He, for example, who has been constrained, by the overwhelming force of the evidence, to accept the Incarnation, is already reconciled to the idea of the direct intervention of God in the affairs of men. No so-called miracle can ever transcend this mystery of mysteries. He may not, must not, hesitate to bring the severest criticism to bear on whatever claims to be a departure from the ordinary course of nature. He may be convinced, besides, of the high probability, that the very fact of true miracles might lead to the invention and multiplication of fictitious counterfeits. But in presence of the one stupendous contravention of the order of nature, which he thoroughly believes, he will hold himself prepared, on good evidence, as the meetest

<sup>1</sup> See note, p. 29.

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and most reasonable thing, to admit the reality of supernatural phenomena, immediately owing to Almighty agency.

In like manner, he who has truly recognised the God-man can never regard this as an isolated, disjointed phenomenon, having no dependence on, and no connexion with, previous history. He must feel, on the contrary, that this can only have been the culmination and the climax of a foregoing series of divine operations and agencies, even as he believes it to be the root and the nucleus of all the new and grand developments which make up the history of Christianity. He is compelled, by the very nature of the case, to connect it with the past. Had there been nothing to guide and help him in this direction, he must, even then, have looked back to discover, if it were possible, how this extraordinary divine intervention linked itself with the early history of man. He could not but be convinced, even in the absence of actual confirmation, that there must have been anticipations, premonitions, preparations, preparations worthy of God, for an event so great and fraught with such consequences to humanity. The Old Testament, in this view, becomes to him a necessity. Apart from this, and on quite other grounds, he finds God in that holy record, the very word and voice of God, even as he finds them

in the New Testament. He is brought face to face, in the one as in the other, with truth—eternal, universal truth—truth belonging alike to all peoples and to all times. There, also, he comes upon facts and experiences of human nature, which are as wide as the race, and as enduring and unchanging as the highest verities and uses of religion. But, had there been none of all this, the Old Testament offers to him the very thing which, with the Incarnation before him, he most needed and desired, for it professes to be the record of the movements of the Most High, introductory and preparatory to the final unveiling of Himself.

All the while, he can freely admit a distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament writings. He may see no cause to deny that the former were never, like the latter, given by God Himself to the whole world, and that what was expressly communicated to a single, select people, may have a meaning for them, and be of authority with them, in a way which does not apply beyond them. Moreover, he is not ignorant that three thousand years or more have elapsed since the earlier portions of the Old Testament were written down, and that, in this interval, they must have passed through myriads of hands, and been transcribed myriads of times, and must inevitably have undergone changes



—minute, perhaps important; changes accidental, perhaps designed; owing to good, perhaps bad intention. And, finally, he may not be able to deny the existence of apparent inaccuracies in the Old Testament, or even of what seem to be contradictions—things, at all events, which have not yet been satisfactorily explained. But with all this, he can calmly rest in the divine inspiration of the ancient Scriptures, and find in them themselves their own highest evidence. Whoever may lightly esteem these holy records, to him they are unspeakably precious on the highest of all grounds, and because, independently of this, they marvellously fill up to him a blank in sacred history which, unfilled, had disturbed his very faith in God.

The mystery of Incarnation had been a thousand times more bewildering than it is, if it had started forth suddenly, sharply, unaccountably, out of utter darkness and silence, and if no token, no hint, had been given of it to the world. It had been staggering, even revolting to reason, if God, having a purpose so grand to carry out, and bearing so mightily on the destiny of man, had kept it a dark secret till the very moment of its disclosure. The world needed to be prepared for it. It is simply in harmony with all which might have been presupposed that the Great Being should have given early in-

timations of His wondrous design, and that a track of light, indicating the divine pathway from the previous ages on to the advent of Christ, should have been at least partially visible. The selection of a peculiar race, and of a particular family, the series of preliminary arrangements, of special, typical institutions, and of repeated predictive anticipations—all do not contradict, but beautifully fall in with what might have been looked for. The earliest of the Old Testament writings are precious, as the religious literature of a period and of races, of which no other monument is extant. But they are yet more precious still, because they expose the nascent unfolding and the successive growth of a grand divine idea, bearing on the highest destiny of man. With their aid, we can go back along the line of preliminary preparations, and are able to follow it up, till it terminates in the fulness of the times, and in the coming of the promised Messiah !

The Incarnation is the great, central sun of revelation ; but it is, also, the beating heart, the inner soul of secular, human history. Light and life stream from this source, through the dreary and darkened annals of the world. A purpose of uncreated wisdom and of infinite love is uttered forth in the majestic eloquence of this fact. Like a bright, solitary star, gleaming in the midnight sky, it tells that

there is light above, if all below and around be dark. Since man is so near to his God, and so dear, as the Incarnation proves him to be, his course can be no aimless pageant, and he can be no poor player, strutting, for a brief hour, on a mimic stage, and then vanishing for ever, originating in no sublime intention, and answering no god-like end. The heart often asks, in deep perplexity—is compelled by the agony of darkness to ask—"What of all the peoples that have figured so largely, in the ages gone by, with their wars, their commerce, and their civilisation, their arts and their sciences, their learning, their literature, their philosophy, and their religion?" Have they not perished utterly, as if they had never existed? Have they not been remorselessly ingulfed in the fathomless immensity, leaving no trace, or next to none, of any purpose of their being, or of any end they have served? As for the existing populations of this teeming world, are not they also changing, and passing and dropping into oblivion? And shall not the races, who may yet cover the globe, and their achievements, and their history, ere long be as those who preceded them, ingulfed and forgotten, as if they had never been? "O God! wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?"

The mystery of Incarnation invests the human

racés, and their movements, and their annals, with a profound interest, and with an infinite significance. It streams with light out of the darkness on all which preceded and on all which has followed it. If man be near and dear to his invisible Father, that Father must ever have, and must ever have had, beneficent designs to accomplish in his behalf—however limited our insight into them may be. The scene, on which the Incarnate appeared, can be meant only for revealing, on a grand scale, the highest purposes of power and of love. If man, on his side, and in his blundering, perverse, wicked way, has, through all the ages, and not wholly in vain, been struggling up towards God, it is far more true, on the other side, that God, with divine serenity and with loving persistency, has been ever moving down towards man, nearer and nearer, as the ages revolved, until at last, in the fulness of the times, in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, He literally and really dwelt with men upon the earth.

The course of this world from the beginning, and in all its parts, though we may not in the least be able to discern either the steps or the results—the course of this world, with all its countless races, and their manifold evolutions and histories, must have been a divine discipline and a progress; a discipline arranged with infinite wisdom, and administered in

infinite love ; a progress, however opposed and obstructed, real and grand—though it have seemed not so to us—towards a mighty and blessed issue. The Incarnation was both an utterance and a prophetic sign ; a mighty utterance in itself, but a sign of immeasurably more than it uttered, betokening in a way not to be gainsaid that there was nothing, absolutely nothing, within the range of possibility, consistency, and rectitude which the Almighty would not do for man. With profound awe we meditate the marvellous intervention of Heaven, and thought deepens into an assured though reverent and awe-struck faith, that the Incarnation was not a sudden extravagance of divine compassion, having no natural antecedents, and no necessary consequents,—not an unaccountable caprice, and not a solitary act of mere arbitrary wilfulness, on which no dependence could be placed, and the like of which might never occur again. It must have been, it was, a deliberate, a majestic, an awful unveiling of the essential, eternal nature of the Great Being, announcing to the universe, and to all time, that that nature was love, illimitable, self-sacrificing, pure love, and laying a foundation for such trust in the Divine Father as had otherwise been impossible. It is carried home to the depths of the soul with irresistible force that, in spite of all seeming, the very best and the very

utmost possible must ever have been done, must now be doing, and must continue to be done by the Almighty for the race of man, in consistency with all the interests and claims of the universe. The short, the instinctive logic of the conscience and the heart leads us to the conclusion, that if the Great God, in very truth, incarnated Himself in the nature of man, that nature must be very dear to Him—unless, indeed, we could persuade ourselves that the whole was a mere pretence, or, at best, only the temporary outburst of a vehement but transient impulse. But it was, it could be no pretence, and no impetuous, momentary effervescence: it sprang, it must have sprung, from a profound, eternal affection of the uncreated soul, which though manifested transcendently in one act, had ever commanded, and is ever commanding, all the resources of illimitable wisdom and power. We may not have made too much of the cross; but there is ground to think that we have made too little of the earlier fact, which invests the cross with all its mysterious significance, and encircles it with all its terrible glory. We are in danger of losing sight of God in the medium<sup>1</sup> through which He uttered Himself—in danger of forgetting that it was really God, no less, who made

<sup>1</sup> See note, p. 29.

the sacrifice which was needed for our redemption, and that he, on whom the pain and the shame of the cross descended, was verily the God-man, a true, a stupendous Incarnation of the divine.

## SECTION SECOND

Sacrifice in Incarnation — God Self-sacrificing — Limitations of Human Medium—"Lamb of God"—Supernaturally Provided —God in Christ Unveiling Himself—Incarnate, Unknown, Rejected—Life Sacrificed—"According to Counsel of God"—A Prey to the Rage and Lust of Men—Divine Self-sacrifice for Sin.

THE root of the idea of the divine sacrifice, as it presents itself in the New Testament, lies in Incarnation. Throughout, quite habitually, the impression is conveyed to every candid reader that God was giving up something very dear to Him, was making a sacrifice, an immense sacrifice for the world. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." It is God's love and God's sacrifice that are ever put before us. It is the strength of God's love that is measured by what it prompted Him to sacrifice. It is He who is represented as giving up,



surrendering, sacrificing so much, that it is argued, "herein is love," the love of God.

In the prophecies of the Old Testament the seer, projecting his mind far into the ages, hears the Messiah expound His own mission, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me." In the room of the old sacrifices something was to be transacted, not by men, but by God. There was to be the preparation of a human body, the assumption of a human form—an Incarnation. "In burnt-offering and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God." The rites of the law of Moses were to be abolished, and in their place a totally new order was to arise. A Messiah, veiling divinity in the form of man, was to come forth, to serve, not to command, and to live a life of obedience and submission.

There is something almost blasphemous in the language we have been employing. Strictly speaking, it is self-contradictory, and involves a clear impossibility. It must be wholly figurative, and must demand for its just interpretation the utmost reverence and modesty. God is essentially immutable—can lose nothing and suffer nothing. From everlasting to everlasting, He is the same,—“The Father of lights, without variableness or shadow of

turning." Nothing can be added to Him, and nothing can be taken from Him. We are wont to speak of God descending to this earth, in order to take on Himself our nature, and again ascending up where He was before. But we are not ignorant, all the while, that change of place is impossible to a Being who is, essentially, everywhere, at every moment. We speak of God stooping down, laying aside His glory, divesting and again investing Himself. But we know that, literally, it is all impossible. It is figure, not reality ; but there is an idea, nevertheless, underneath the figure, and an idea which is both true and grand. We are obliged to employ language which is literally untrue ; we can employ none other, but we have a true meaning to convey by the use of the language. God is essentially for ever the same, but divine manifestations are endless and various. Unchangeable in Himself, God is specially manifested here, but not there ; in one form here, in another there ; in certain aspects of His nature here, in certain other aspects there. The flower, the star, the mountain, the ocean, the living animal, the soul of man, are so many distinct manifestations of God. All utter truth concerning Him who created them, but each a different shade of truth, whilst Himself is ever

the same, unchanged amidst all these varieties of utterance, and unchangable.

The Incarnation of God in Christ Jesus transcends all possible analogies and illustrations. It is alone. There can be no likeness of it, except a repetition of itself. We cannot explain it, cannot comprehend it, but we believe it, and have ample ground for believing that it must be true. And more than this, there is even light for our poor vision to guide, so far, into the darkness which surrounds this profound mystery. We are able to assert, for example, and, in some available degree, to understand when we assert, that in the Incarnation, itself alone, in the mere fact separated from all its accessories, the Great God did the nearest thing possible to making a personal sacrifice, for behoof of his creatures. He identified Himself with an inferior nature, and made it His, in a sense, true only that once and never approached in a single instance besides. All the old sacrifices had been made by men to God; but this, whatever of the nature of sacrifice there was in it, was made by God for men. The only thing coming under the name of sacrifice, which was possible to Him, the Great God did. He took into union with Himself a nature which was capable of suffering,

and change, and loss; He dwelt mysteriously, incomprehensibly in that nature, and He possessed and pervaded it as His own. To our conceptions, when God entered into the soul of Jesus, when He united Himself with it, when He spoke through it and acted from it, forth upon the world of men, He thus far, literally and truly, sacrificed Himself; that is to say, in this regard, and for the time, He actually submitted to conditions, to certain inevitable conditions. As God in man, though only in this relation and aspect, He limited Himself, necessarily limited Himself, to the kind and the degree of manifestation which were possible through a human medium. God's sacrifice for the world was not a fiction but a reality.

The supernatural birth of Jesus exhibits, in a manner altogether extraordinary, both the reality and the solitary grandeur of the divine sacrifice. Had the Messiah appeared in the common line of succession, among human births, like any other unit of the race, his life had then been, as all others were and are, a natural necessity, irrespective of any purpose which might be served by it, however exalted. That life had then been due to the race from which he sprang, due to the laws of nature, in obedience to which it had and must have originated, and due to the order of provi-

dence, which must have included it in the sum of the human population, and which could not be contravened. The fact was wondrously and beautifully, quite otherwise. The life of Jesus was not owing to any law of natural succession or to any fixed series of antecedents and consequents. There was no necessity in nature or in common providence, no obligation from without, of any kind, which made it imperative, that he should appear among men at all. There was absolutely no reason whatever, for his human existence, except that God had a special purpose to serve by it, and therefore, but only therefore, originated it. That existence was wholly out of the natural line of events, wholly supplemental and additional, not a link in a chain, but a new, a solitary, an unparalleled insertion into the sum of earthly being, standing wholly by itself, without antecedent and without consequent. Had there been no special divine purpose, Jesus not only might never have lived, but most certainly never could have lived. He was introduced among men for the very purpose of being, from first to last, a sacrifice for the world, and nothing else. He existed for this sole end, that he might give himself up, and might be given up by God for men, and except for this he had never existed at all.

In simple literal truth, God made the sacrifice which was needed for the world—though, all the while, in perfect accordance with the human will of Jesus. In His wise love, God added this true man, body and soul, to the sum of the earth's natural population. God so entered into, as to identify Himself with this spotless Being; entered so far, necessarily, only so far as it was possible for a human medium<sup>1</sup> to contain and to reveal His nature. But so really and so thoroughly did God identify Himself with the man of Nazareth, that Jesus was always from the first in immediate, though incomprehensible union with Him,—the God-man. A stupendous act of pure self-abasement and self-sacrifice on the part of the Great God, was done in the sight of all nations and ages; a true Incarnation, a descent of the divine into the human, stood revealed in the person of the Redeemer of men.

The purpose of majestic benignity was so manifest in the act, that the wonder is it could be misapprehended. Men were to understand, as they never otherwise could have understood, what their invisible Father really was, and how infinitely He loved them, even in their sins. They were to learn, in a way inexpressibly subduing, that there was nothing which

<sup>1</sup> See note, page 29.

He was not prepared to do, in order that they might be reconciled and redeemed. They were to behold, in a human impersonation, an image of divine majesty, purity, wisdom, and love, and be drawn to it in spite of themselves. They had forsaken God, but God shall stoop to go after them. Separation from Him was perdition. His restored presence alone, freely recognised and welcomed once more by them, could bring back life to their deserted and dying natures. Hence, and only hence, the Great God meekly put Himself before men, and in a humble form, came near to their homes and to their souls, as near as it was possible for Him to come. In one like themselves He came near, in one who went in and out among them, one who had human thoughts and human ways, human sympathies and feelings, human experiences like theirs, He came. Only life can kindle life. The Life, the one source of all life in the universe, the eternally living Being, came near to a dead world, to touch it, to breathe upon it, to infuse Himself into it, and to quicken it for ever. It was the divine in Jesus that was power over the souls of men while He lived on earth. It is the divine in Jesus, that now is, and that shall continue to be power over the souls of men. Our deepest need is God, our ruin, our perdition is disseverance from God, our redemption is the re-

indwelling of God in our nature. Therefore it was that our Father humbled Himself, sacrificed Himself, to come near to us in Christ, to let us see, as with our very bodily eyes, and to make us feel the love of His heart. Therefore it was, that He so subduingly appealed to us, and was prepared to respond to the faintest, lingering sense of the divine that might lie dormant within, to recreate it where it had seemed utterly perished, and to satisfy it with Himself. Very God incarnated Himself in Christ, the Christ who lived and died on this earth. It was God who looked forth on men through the eyes of Christ, God who spoke to men through the voice of Christ, God who beamed on men from the face of Christ. It was God, His majesty and power, His purity and wisdom, His abhorrence of evil and infinite pity for evil-doers, His gentleness and patience, His meekness and His boundless mercy which were unveiled throughout the whole life and in the whole spirit of Christ. The very heart of God, in its deepest fountains, was laid open and was seen to gush forth in the tears and in the life-blood of Christ. Christ was full of God; up to the highest limit of the capacity of a pure human soul, Christ was full of God, breathing out, streaming forth, brimming over with the divine, that the



divine, through his medium<sup>1</sup> (mediation) might re-enter men's souls and might subdue and quicken and restore them. And it did ; as a simple matter of fact, it did.

Jesus while he lived on earth sought and gained an entrance—an entrance for God—into human souls. Silently, even more than openly, he deposited in the world a hidden leaven, which ever since has been diffusing itself through the mass of humanity and shall continue to diffuse itself, until the whole be leavened. Often unobserved, but with a free hand, he scattered on all sides the incorruptible seed of the kingdom. Many a harvest from that first sowing has since been reaped, but the full produce shall be known only at the last great ingathering day, when the world's harvest-home shall be celebrated. During the earthly life of Christ many were touched and probed as they never had been before. New and strange thoughts were widely awakened—thoughts concerning the existing state of things, religion, worship, and personal virtue, concerning sin and its desert, concerning the future life and its double aspect, concerning God, His

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<sup>1</sup> I look on this, as supplying the key to some of the eccentric intricacies of scholastic theology, and revealing the entire meaning of the doctrine of mediation.

character, His providence, and His relation to men, and not least, concerning the marvellous Person, who stood before them and spoke and acted in God's name, with such authority and with such meekness. We can imagine, what indeed was the literal historical fact, a state of profound wonder created in many parts of Judea, a startled tremulous feeling awakened, as if something were about to happen, they knew not what, a sense of the divine, as if they felt that somehow God was very near. It is certain that by his blessed earthly life, by his acts of power and love, by his words of wisdom and grace, by the stainless purity, the beauty and all the winning attractions of his character, by the holy, loving spirit which flowed out from his entire life, and encircled him like a robe and diffused a divine breath all around him, by the ignominies and the agonies and the unquenchable love of his death, by God in him, by the God who found in him, and most wondrously of all, in his cross, a new *medium*<sup>1</sup> through which to come down on men, in a way never before possible, Jesus while he lived and when he died, acted on the world with a secret, holy power. He has never since ceased, nor shall he ever cease, to wield this spiritual power over the minds and hearts of men. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." What was once

<sup>1</sup> See note on previous page.

only prediction is now history. It is as if in calm, far-seeing faith, our humbled Lord had said, "In spite of the anguish and the shame of the cross, by means of the anguish and the shame of the cross, as no remote cause, I shall yet conquer the world and gain all hearts, and reign in them as their chosen Saviour and King."

During the earthly life of our Lord, not one even of his chosen disciples seems to have ascended to the idea of Incarnation. He was "the teacher sent from God," "a prophet in the power and spirit of Elijah," "the Christ," "the Son of the living God;" but by all such language, they meant no more, than that he was the Messiah, the Anointed, the most honoured messenger of Heaven. Perhaps on reflection it may be found, that the real wonder is, not that the disciples did not at once discover the whole truth concerning their Master, but that they recognised so much as they did, and that even whilst he stood amongst them, in his youth, his poverty, his obscurity, and all the perplexing circumstances which environed him, their reverence for him was so profound and their devotion to him so intense. They thought the very highest and worthiest possible of their Lord, but in the nature of the case he was too near, too constant an object of sight, and too closely encircled with seeming incompatibilities for the idea of essential divinity, to

take assured hold of their minds. Incarnation, profoundly true, was a truth of reflection, not of perception, a truth for the meditative, contemplative states of the soul, when it is most set free from the outward senses and from the prejudices of education and of habit.

Jesus must be withdrawn in order to be truly known. The disciples must be left to think, to ponder in quiet all which they had seen and heard, away from those outward environments which necessarily encumbered and swayed their judgments. Then, but not till then, the whole truth flashed upon them, and they were simply amazed at their previous blindness. But they could not have been amazed at the last, unless they had been beforehand ripening and were at length ripe for the conclusion at which they arrived. They now saw, but not before, that the divine had so often come forth in the words and the life and the very face of Jesus, that unless their eyes had been sealed, they must have been overpowered by the evidence. The Incarnate was apprehended more clearly and understood better, after his departure, than during his stay among men. The disciples could then, and only then, look back on his course as a whole, weigh all the circumstances, compare, contrast, and connect together, what they had witnessed only in

detached portions, and thus form a juster conception than had been possible before. The clear conviction took hold of them, and rooted itself in their souls, that Jesus was divine. It was an overwhelming truth, but it was a truth, and they never ceased to proclaim it, as the highest theme of their mission, that very God had loved the world, had stooped down in Christ Jesus, that He might lift up His creatures, and in order to conquer man had Himself become man.

While he lived on earth, the veiled brightness of the Father's glory was truly unknown; in the patient, wise love of God, he was suffered to be unknown. Divinity might have flashed forth in rays of overwhelming splendour, and ignorance and unbelief had been impossible, but all the high moral ends of the marvellous intervention must have been lost in such a case. Jesus willingly submitted to be unknown, meekly gave himself up to be set at nought and scorned. "He was despised, and we esteemed him not; he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Through life till death he bore the contradiction of sinners against himself. He was obscure, and poor, and hungry, and thirsty, and faint. Full of gentle pity, weeping with human sorrow, tenderly caring for the af-

flicted, for the children of penury and toil, for the tempted and even for the fallen, his life from its beginning to its close was one of constant humiliation, privation, and suffering. Doing only good in countless forms of loving-kindness and of power, and uttering words of heavenly wisdom and grace, which are living and mighty at this hour, men could not endure him. Either he must cease to be what he was, or he must cease to live. The first was impossible; the last became a terrible reality. They falsely charged him with crime, they condemned him to death, they crucified him between two thieves, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost and died.

It is no question, but a historical fact, that Jesus fell a sacrifice to the cruelty and hatred of men. It is no question, but a historical fact, that he deliberately and voluntarily sacrificed his own life, and we are assured that this fact was no less "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." All that he endured, he endured of his own free choice and purpose; but he did so, at the same time, in loving submission to the Supreme disposal. Not a jot did he seek to bate. At all hazards and at whatever cost, he calmly persevered to the last. Men, with wicked hands, might seek to stop his course—

without supernatural intervention, they could not have been restrained from the attempt—but that course must not be abandoned by him. And it was not. Calmly, meekly prepared for the worst, he would not and did not quail before the extremest perils of his divine mission. God in him, and through him, was willing to do anything and everything for the redemption of the world. At last the Father, instead of shielding and saving, gave up to human malice and rage, that beloved Son in whom He was ever well pleased.

Behold “the Lamb of God!” God’s sacrifice, not man’s, although it was for man—wholly for man. Behold the surrender which God was willing to make, and did make, for the world! If ever that word, sacrifice, was fitly applied, it is here; for Jesus was literally offered up a sacrifice to the rage and lust of men. And if ever a sacrifice could justly be called God’s,—could be said to be made by God, it was this; for God had provided the Lamb for a burnt-offering, in a way altogether unexampled. And it was God, ever in beautiful and entire harmony with the human will of Jesus, who, from the first, yielded up this victim for the world, and at last suffered it to fall a sacrifice to the clamours of a maddened populace.<sup>1</sup> But,

<sup>1</sup> It abides for ever not less true, that our Lord freely sacri-

withal, if that holy Being, born of the Virgin Mary, was never mere man, but ever a divine man, if very God was in mysterious union with this humanity, inhabiting, possessing, and filling it, in a way we cannot comprehend, what shall, what can be said, without blasphemy, of the cross? The overwhelming truth seems to stand out distinctly and awfully, that in giving up Christ—himself ever a willing victim—to a life of toil, and sorrow, and thankless neglect, and to a death of shame and pain, the Great God was making not only a true surrender, but in some real sort a personal surrender. The Incarnation itself alone—the bare mysterious fact—was, to our conceptions, a descent, a stooping down, a self-abasement on the part of God. But the humbled, afflicted life of the Incarnate, closing in an ignominious and cruel death was yet more significantly a sacrifice, a sacrifice baptized in blood, and crowned with thorns, and crushed beneath a cross; it was a prolonged act of virtual self-sacrifice on the part of the invisible God,

ficed his life in the cause of God and of man. "He loved us," says an apostle, "and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, of ■ sweet smelling savour." No sacrifice ever was so pleasing to God, as that which Christ offered in his own body on the tree; and none had ever so rich and sweet a fragrance as when Christ bowed his head and died—died because he loved man, and the God to whom man was, by this wondrous means, to be restored and reconciled.



for our Lord could say, though the words be strictly inexplicable and unfathomable by us, "I and my Father are one."

The ground of sacrifice can only be evil, not good. In a perfect state, with only wise and pure beings, sacrifice would be impossible, for amidst the conditions of such a state, no cause of suffering or loss could exist. Things must have gone wrong, disaster and mischief must have arisen, before the necessity could be created for encountering, either personally or through loving intervention, a lesser evil, in order to prevent or retrieve a greater. If the Father sacrificed His beloved Son, and if we may dare to say that God in Christ submitted to a real, literal self-sacrifice, it can only have been on account of sin, for sin, certainly not for holiness.<sup>1</sup> The spotless Lamb of God was offered up, for no other assignable or possible reason, than because of the sin and ruin of men. Hence, with literal beautiful truth, the words are applied to him, "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree." So also, "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." As a matter of personal desert, he could have had neither sorrows,

<sup>1</sup> All such expressions in the New Testament, as "He died for our sins," &c., that is, on account of sin, because of sin, express the simple, literal fact; unquestionably the notion of expiation is, at all events, not necessarily or even naturally involved.

nor griefs, nor sins ; but in undertaking our cause he made, as far as that was possible, our sorrows, our griefs, and our sins, his own. The necessary effects of evil in this evil world came upon him, as if he had been an evil-doer. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." But it was a mistake, he was not smitten of God, as the prophet had said. No, by no means, "He was wounded for our transgressions," not on any personal account at all ; "He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

Jesus lived and died wholly and solely for man, and because of man's sins. He sacrificed himself, his life, his soul, and was sacrificed by God, for the world, and on account of the world's sins. As the second Adam, the new head of humanity, he came to take the very position, and to enter into the very circumstances, and into the entire earthly condition of man. In this sense, he was really substituted for man, in order that he might do what man ought to have done for himself, but never could have done. In this view, all that he said, all that he did, and all that he endured, was truly vicarious and substitutionary, was on no personal account, and for no personal ends whatever, but for the sake and on account of the

world, and nothing else. Our Lord Jesus Christ had no personal interests to serve, apart from man, and no purely personal obligations of any kind to meet. He had not even a personal existence at all, except in relation to man. True, he was acting for God. He was the being specially introduced into the race, and literally produced by God, to deal with men, and through whose wondrous medium<sup>1</sup> (mediation,) God purposed to reconcile them to Himself. He had, therefore, the highest divine interests to care for and to conduct. But emphatically he was acting for man, and originating spiritual influences which should bear with almighty force upon the nature of man. The highest human interests were committed to his hands, and lay on his heart. The whole purpose of his being, the absorbing passion of his soul, is expressed in a single word, reconciliation—atonement—the reconciliation of man to God. He came, he lived, he died, he lives for evermore to reconcile, to atone men to their Father. Personally, during his life in this world, this was the purpose at which he aimed, and which he accomplished, in measure. But he accomplished it, because he was unconsciously felt, even where he was not fully known, to be God's

<sup>1</sup> See note, page 29.

sacrifice—the outcome and the utterance of God's reconciling, atoning love. The cross triumphed, in the hands of the apostles, because it was the cross of incarnate love, for this was not only never disguised, but everywhere proclaimed aloud,—God-in-Christ, not God, not The Absolute God, but “God-in-Christ is reconciling (gaining back) the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” This was the holy, lofty theme of apostolic preaching!—Infinite love, making a stupendous surrender, uttering itself in a mysterious act of self-sacrifice, for man and on account of man's sin. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

The cross, as a symbol of the divine, has become the sublimest and most sacred object in the universe! It is a power all but resistless, to touch and to subdue the soul of man; and the source of its power goes down to the earlier, deeper mystery of Incarnation. The bare idea of God loving the world at all, being what it was, of God so loving the world as to become incarnate—and it is only the remotest fringe and verge of the thought which it is possible for us to reach;—the bare idea of Incarnation, and of the meek, enduring patience of the Incarnate, is overwhelming,

and the heart realising it, even for an instant, is scarcely able to bear the conception.

That the Great God, the Father of all souls, should pity and love them in their sins, should so love them as to come near to them, to come down among them; that He should preternaturally introduce and add to the race a true human being, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and His own only-begotten and beloved Son; that very God, the one awful, incomprehensible Jehovah, should enter into and unite Himself with the human soul of Jesus Christ, and should, in this regard, limit Himself by the conditions of humanity; that this God-man, in mere pure love to a darkened, fallen, and sinful world, should live on the earth and walk among men as one of them; that he should suffer himself to be unknown in his true character, and to be known only as an obscure and poor young man, a working mechanic; that he, perfectly spotless, undefiled and separate from sinners, going about doing good, preaching, and teaching, and working miracles of mercy, should submit to be persecuted, despised, and hated, and should meekly bear all the contradictions of sinners without a murmur to the last; that he being what he was, should preserve his obscurity and keep the veil drawn

close around him, in steadfast fidelity to his own and his Father's purpose, and in simple consistency with the position he had assumed, when a word or an unuttered wish would have been sufficient to reveal his glory; that in intense, pure regard for such beings as those who at last murdered him, he should meekly go through all the scenes of the last Supper, the garden of Gethsemane, the hall of Caiaphas, the judgment-hall of Pilate, and of Mount Calvary, and the cross!

This is the unscrutable mystery of incarnate love! the hidden spring of that moral power over the human heart, which, in myriads of instances, has proved irresistible. On the one hand, God in Christ—in Christ in his life, in Christ on the cross—is reconciling men to Himself, and employing His mightiest instrument for recovering, gaining back, redeeming the world. On the other hand, Christ—Christ in his life, Christ on the cross, is God impersonated, so far as a human medium and method of impersonation could reach. Christ is the nature of God, brought near and unveiled to human eyes. Christ is the heart of God laid open, that men might almost hear the beat of its unutterable throbbings, might almost feel the rush of its mighty pulsations. The Incarnate in his life, and in his death, in his words and

in his deeds, in his whole character, and spirit, and work on earth, was ever unveiling the Father, and making a path for the Father, into the human soul. But on the cross, Christ presses into the very centre of the world's heart, takes possession of it, and there in that centre preaches, as nowhere else was possible, the gospel of God's love! "Be ye reconciled to God," he cries, "Come back to your Father! He hath sent me to call you back! Inflexibly righteous as He is, He pities, He loves you, and only waits to forgive and welcome you!"

Beautiful and simple is the primitive New Testament gospel. It was this which, with plentiful effusion of the Holy Ghost, was proclaimed through the wide earth, with triumphant effect, by apostles. It is this, which has ever since been and shall continue to be mighty through God, until every knee shall bow to him, who lived and died for men, and until every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?





## CHAPTER II.

### HUMAN SIN.

SECTION FIRST.—WHAT SIN IS, AND THE SENSE OF SIN.

SECTION SECOND.—REDEMPTION FROM SIN.



## SECTION FIRST.

What Sin is and the Sense of Sin—Essential Distinction—Burden of Universe—Radical Difficulty in Speculation—Unrest in all Earnest Souls—Consciousness of Sin—Its Development—Legitimate Result.

**D**ARKNESS is a simple negative—the absence of light, no more. In the moral region, that which answers to physical darkness is a dire positive, no mere negative, but reality, as monstrous as it is real. The radical difficulty in all speculation which ventures within the highest sphere of thought, is sin,—not weakness, not original imperfection, not misfortune, not accident, owing to some untoward, fortuitous combination of influences, but distinctly sin,—real essential evil, conscious, voluntary evil, resistance to what is known to be right, and choice of what is known to be wrong.

Incarnation supposes human sin as its necessary ground. Except for this deadly, self-originated curse in the nature of man, no sacrifice, and above all, no such sacrifice, had been needed from the

loving Father. There is one, only one, foul blot on God's universe, and this the Almighty has been at infinite pains to wipe out. Whatever creatures think of it, to their Creator sin must be reality, a dread reality. It means the disorganisation, the pollution, the ruin of created minds, the one fountain of misery and crime.

"Everything in Christianity," says Müller, "relates to the great contrast between sin and redemption, and it is impossible to understand the doctrine of redemption, which is the very essence of Christianity, until we have a thorough knowledge of sin. Christian theology here, if anywhere, wages war, *pro aris et focis*, with Deistical extenuations, and Pantheistical attenuations of this doctrine."<sup>1</sup> With much that is profoundly true, in

<sup>1</sup> "Die Christliche Lehre, von der Sünde." Julius Müller, Breslau, 1858. Vorwort, s. 3, 4. The English sentences quoted are taken from a very faithful translation by the Rev. W. Pulsford, now of Glasgow. Müller's treatise is one of the most remarkable theological efforts of which Germany can boast. It is a vindication of evangelical doctrine, but in the language, and after the mode of another school of thought. The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are Esau's, and the outward dress and figure belong to the disinherited son. The work is orthodox as the phrase goes, though with some not inconsiderable exceptions, but the method and the structure are conspicuously philosophic, even rationalistic. For extensive learning, searching criticism, exhaustive discussion, accurate, subtle, and clear logic, the utmost painstaking and the severest elaboration, it would be difficult, in any language, on any subject, to match this masterly production. Modern philosophy in

these statements, there mingles, as we judge, a dangerous fallacy. A thorough, meaning as Müller certainly intends, a scientific knowledge and interpretation of sin, we must hold to be impossible. We know sufficiently well what sin is in ourselves, and we see clearly enough its manifestations in others, but we cannot account for it. It defies interpretation. There is an inscrutable mystery in human sin, which removes it beyond the reach of logic, and far out of the range of scientific treatment. It is impossible to place it on a purely scientific basis, and to reduce it to recognised laws. Sin is not, in any sense, a law of matter or of mind, it obeys no law, and is altogether outside the sphere of law. It is not an intelligible principle, but the

the hands of Kant, Schelling, and Hegel, patristic and scholastic theology are each laid under contribution. The nature of sin, its ground-principle, the various theories respecting it, as simple or dualistic, as privation, deformity, metaphysical imperfection, necessity or antagonism between the senses and the soul: the causation of sin, the fact and the universality of sin, the corruption of human nature; all are laboriously investigated and discussed. The whole field is examined with most minute and patient care, and not a single corner, not a spot of it is overlooked. At the same time, this very excellence is also a fault. The distinctions and reasonings are too subtle, too minute, and the impression is produced of logical wire-drawing and hair-splitting. And then, owing to the author's manifest desire to leave nothing untouched, the side discussions are so numerous, without being important, that it amounts to waste labour, and worse, for the labour wearies the spirit of the reader. The work is one of extraordinary merit, but it can interest deeply only a select class of readers.

overthrow of all principles. Essentially considered, it is the violation of all order and of all law, wholly an abnormal, anomalous outgrowth of human nature. But inscrutable as the mystery is, its real existence is proclaimed by the universal consciousness. Research, criticism, discussion are invaluable, here as everywhere, in their own place, but with all their aid, we reach our deepest satisfaction, only in the clear testimony of the inward witness, and so much the more, because we find this to be a distinct echo of the voice of God in His holy Word. Each human being knows within himself, that he sins when he sins, and what sin really is.

There is no merit in admitting that in some quarters, there has been too sweeping a denunciation of human nature, as if it were only and wholly bad, and as if it retained no trace of God, or of goodness of any kind. We have unhealthily stimulated certain minds, peculiarly constituted, have tempted them to brood over the fact, the nature and the desert of moral evil, produced in them a state of diseased sensibility, and have thus led the way to fanaticism and superstition. The habit of spiritual self-dissection, of analysing and testing the inward states, has been unwisely fostered, and has often been cruelly severe, and has as often resulted in most dishonouring thoughts of

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God, His severity, His justice, His vengeance, and His pitiless infliction of punishment.

But it cannot be denied, on the other hand, that there are many who, owing to their education and associations, their keen enjoyment of earthly life, and their eager interest in it, their ambition, their self-reliance, and their buoyancy of soul, do in effect make a mock of sin, and treat it as a morbid fiction. That which underlies the whole Bible, as among its deepest foundations; that, without which all God's inspirations and all the agencies of moral providence are either mockery or folly; that to which the laws of all nations and the history of all times bear emphatic witness; that which the consciousness of every thoughtful man attests as strongly as it attests his existence, is put aside, as worthy of no consideration. An atrocious violator of human and divine laws, it is thought, may reasonably be a prey to terror, and naturally enough may cry to Heaven for mercy, since he can expect none from earth. But it is strongly maintained, that with regard to men in general, with regard to persons of average character and standing, a feeling of alarm on account of what is called sin, must prove either imbecility or disease, or both, and can argue nothing but the weakness of ignorance, or a morbid fanaticism, unjust to man,

and betraying most false conceptions of the Almighty. The very word "sin" is interdicted as an offence, save in the sphere of theology. Though all experience proves sin to be an invariable and universal quality of human nature, it must not be named, except under certain stringent conditions. The vices and the crimes of nations and of times are pronounceable, but their sins, not by any means, except from the sacred desk and by the professional teacher of religion.

Sin means something other than is conveyed by the word "vice," or "crime," or any similar term. The idea of God is called up, and is meant to be called up. It is something with which He has to do, which He sees and marks, and which amounts to a real wrong done to Him. A man's sin touches his character before his Maker, and declares him amenable to the eye and to the law of the Great Judge. But herein lies the very ground of offence. Men are not, it is said, and must not constitute themselves, each other's judges. The secrets of the conscience belong sacredly to the individual, and no man, unless in a presumptuous and Pharisaic spirit, is entitled to step forth from his compeers, as if he were holier than they, and to speak of their sins, and to rank them as sinners, intruding into the very sacredest of all their relations—that



in which they stand to the Almighty. Sins come only within the province of God. It belongs to Him, and only to Him, to judge His creatures, and to punish or forgive; and before Him the best and the worst of men, it is thought, may be very much on a level. Perhaps the Infinitely Holy does not at all regard sins as we, in our morbid religiousness, are tempted to do. Perhaps all sins will be dealt with mercifully by Him at the last.


The difference in these two modes of estimating moral evil is fundamental, and radical; and with pain it must be noted, that even the ancient heathendom will be found to utter a lesson on this subject, not unneeded in these later days. That darkened, perplexed, troubled, mood of soul, at the root of which lies the hidden consciousness of evil, (imbecile as it may appear to modern heroism,) was not strange to the earnest and gifted sages of the old world. They did not use the conventional words of modern creeds, and were not accustomed to speak as we do of the anxious sense of personal sin. But they were profoundly anxious and in earnest, nevertheless, and what burdened and disquieted them amidst their researches, and what lay underneath all the perplexity and unrest which they felt, was in very deed the old and ever new question, which no true soul can escape, "How shall man

be right with God." The longer they pondered the dark questions of the universe, and the farther they seemed to pierce into the darkness, ever the more forcibly were they thrown back on themselves, and made to feel vaguely and troubledly that there was a mystery within, having its dark type without, which they could not solve, which they ever dreaded to attempt to solve.

The ancient philosophies are all oppressed, confounded, and baffled, by the problem of God ! What is He ? Where ? How ? Is there an eternal unity ? And if there be, by what method can we ascend to it. The real cause of this perplexity does not appear on the surface ; it is hidden, covered over, involved and tangled, but it is not hard to discover nevertheless. That which rendered the problem of God so overwhelming was a darker question still, which ancient sages durst not face, a question lying far more within than in the outer universe, the question of evil, real, essential, voluntary evil, sin. The great early thinkers tried hard to pierce back into the eternal darkness, to descry if but a single spark-point of primeval light. They searched for unity, causality, absolute being. But the search was for ever distracting. A voice from within, answering to a voice from without, seemed to mock their efforts. "First solve your own nature," it

demanded ; "all things are out of course," it proclaimed, "harmony is a dream, mystery impenetrable is above, below, around." The few tones, solemn and grand and deep, still sounding in the world's ear, which were moaned out long ago, by the old sages of Elea, Xenophanes, and Parmenides, have an almost infinite sorrow in them. It is even true of the Socratic and Platonic philosophy, with on the one side its keen humour, its common sense, and its deep profundity, and on the other side, its all but divine beauty, its mystic imagery, its discriminating, and far reaching insight. There is throughout an undertone of sadness, of unrest, and of doubt, which to miss, is to lose half the power of the impression which it makes. It is the same, if we look on, to the age of Proclus and Plotinus, the Alexandrian followers of the Athenian sage. Very emphatically it is the same, if stepping across the intervening centuries, we pass downward to Spinoza, and Schelling, and Hegel, and Fichte, and from them, to the leaders of the higher speculation in these modern days. All true souls, in their hours of profoundest contemplation, have been oppressed with deep sadness, but it has ever been owing, far more to a cause within their nature, than either to the profundity or the vastness of the subject of their thoughts.

Philosophical methods have often broken up in a wail of disappointment. The universe has defied interpretation. Research, long successful, has come to an abrupt close, and the philosophical inquirer has found that without intending it, or for a long time being even conscious of it, he has landed in speculation on his own being, as if either the deepest or the most vexing secret lay within and not without. At the same time, it is also true and equally true, that the individual soul is a fair type of the outer frame of things. Both alike are confused, ravelled, and disorganised. Impenetrable darkness hangs over them, immovable perplexity wraps them round, a sore burden is crushing them with its intolerable weight. Ever and again, the thought darts across the soul, that somehow the perplexity, the darkness, and the burden are centred in man. The radical curse of the world is moral, not physical. Man is at fault out of harmony with his Maker, and forsaking and opposing what is supremely right and good. The dark mystery of the outer creation is but the shadow cast by the darker mystery within man's nature. Often altogether unconsciously, but sometimes with a dim half-consciousness, the ages have been struggling towards light, but a dense opacity in the innermost region of the soul has intercepted and quenched



the descending rays. The sense of unrest and of fear, at the bottom of the world's heart, has found a voice, through many different modes, in multitudes of separate souls. It is essentially the same in all, and virtually it may be translated into the ancient cry, "How shall man be right with God." And this, again, Christianised and more deliberately articulated and defined, assumes the form familiar to us, "What shall I do to be saved?"

Sin, the resistance of the human will to what is known to be true, and right, and good—sin is a dire reality. The Great God has pronounced His judgment respecting it in the Incarnation, and more profoundly or more solemnly He could not have spoken. The sense of sin in the human spirit is not less real than the existence of sin. It is a genuine human experience, which will not be ignored. To call it either weakness or disease, is simply false and in the face of superabundant evidence. There can be no impartiality or wisdom, not even simple justice to a great question which we profess to entertain, in shutting our eyes against a distinct fact of human nature. Men, neither imbecile nor fanatical, nor nervously diseased, but intelligent, gifted, and sober-minded; men, too, of at least as blameless lives as others,

have been oppressed by the consciousness of inward evil against God, and have been filled with apprehension, when they calmly reflected, to what that evil must lead, and ought in justice to lead. And such men, when the light at length shone within them, have invariably been confounded at their previous indifference. It has then seemed to them clear as day, that if they had had but eyes to see, they must long before have seen all which has at last become so vivid and so portentous.

Can it be irrational or unnatural, for the created spirit to think of the Infinite, All-creating Spirit; unnatural to try to conceive the relation in which it stands to the great Father of all souls; unnatural to anticipate, in thought, the moment when it shall be disembodied, before His presence? It shall be disembodied, in no long course of years. That is perfectly certain. Can it be unworthy of the intellect, to recognise and to ponder deeply this certainty? On the contrary, must it not become every enlightened man, is it not in the highest degree imperative upon him, as a plain dictate of reason and as the most sacred duty, to forecast that unknown and inconceivable condition of being, into which the disembodied spirit shall be ushered? He shall certainly then be near,

in a sense he has never before been, to that Infinite Power, on whom, from the first moment of existence, he has been wholly and ceaselessly dependent. And is this an idea, were there nothing more, unlikely to pierce to the depths of his nature? Or, in the light of this guiding idea, is it unnatural for him to reflect that, during his earthly life, he has seldom deliberately thought of this Being, to whom he may soon be so near, and who is so great, so pure, and so good? But he has been consciously disinclined to think of God. That is the simple fact. He has put aside the thought when it presented itself, and has felt it to be unwelcome. The inner current of his mind, his thinkings, his inclinations, his tastes, and the outer current of his life, have been in frequent opposition to the law and to the will of his God. He has often been consciously and voluntarily out of harmony with truth and right, and love and God. There may be no exaggerated, fanatical, superstitious self-accusations and condemnations. He may feel that he has lived—much as others have done—on the whole, innocently and virtuously. There may be no flagrant violations of morality with which he can charge himself. But this is clear to him, he has not thought or cared to think of his God. He has not loved and not

served, or even deliberately purposed to serve, the Being to whom he owes everything—the Father of his soul. The sense of God has not been the uppermost force within him—the central inner spring of his whole life. It has seldom touched that life, or entered into it at all. Without any violent hysterical alarms, but with deep solicitude, his mind is distinctly conscious of wrong done to God, as well as to the highest part of his own nature, grievous and persistent wrong. Can it be degrading in these circumstances, must it not be rational and altogether inevitable, for an instructed, reflective man to fall back on such questions as these,—“How shall I meet my Maker?—how can I lift up my face before Him now, and what can I answer Him hereafter?—how shall I escape righteous retribution?” If the Scriptures declare, as they do, that “the soul that sinneth shall die,” and that “the wages of sin is death,” he, on his part, is unable to withhold a full amen, unable to deny that the sentence is just, simply just and true, absolutely true.

This is the sense of sin, conscious, voluntary evil against God, which is a genuine human experience, verified in myriads of instances, and resulting simply from earnest and calm thought on the highest and truest of all certainties. Where



it is profound as well as sincere, the experience forces from the heart a cry to the living God for escape. The man in whom it is begotten would eagerly undo what he has done if he could, but it is impossible. His instant necessity is escape—escape from a danger which he sees to be immediate, and dreads as inevitable,—“What must I do to be saved.”

## SECTION SECOND.

Redemption from Sin—"Way of Salvation"—Adaptations and Subtlety—Ground of Forgiveness—Not Honouring to God—Sin, not Punishment, greatest Evil—Divine Self-sacrifice smites Root of Sin—Gradual and Final Redemption.

**A**MONG many varying methods of answering the vital question of the soul, there is one which I am sincerely desirous of presenting in its best and truest form, because it is held by multitudes to be the reply, and the one only reply, found in holy Scripture. It is to this effect.<sup>1</sup> Sin is a debt to the Almighty, which can never be cancelled by man, and which, after ages of punishment, instead of being lessened, will be for ever and ever increasing. But Christ, by his death on the cross in the room of man, has paid the debt to the uttermost farthing,—at all events, has done what is perfectly equivalent, and answers the same purpose, in the moral government of the world. Sin is a burden on the soul, which

<sup>1</sup> The subject, only cursorily touched here, is fully discussed in its various bearings in the succeeding chapters.

must for ever weigh it down to perdition. But Christ has taken that burden on himself ; at all events, has done what is perfectly equivalent, and answers the same purpose. Sin deserves, and must bring down, the penalty of eternal death, eternal exclusion from God [and from all good. The violated law, the outraged justice of God, and the security of moral government, alike demand it. But Christ has vindicated the moral government of God, magnified the broken law, satisfied divine justice, and endured the full penalty of sin ; at all events, has done what is perfectly equivalent, and answers the same purpose. And now God, the holy, the just, and the true, in entire consistency with His own attributes, with all the interests of the universe, and with the security of His own government, not only can freely pardon, but is perfectly willing to pardon, and only waits to welcome penitent souls.

The great fact of divine forgiveness is unmistakably proclaimed here ; but it is proclaimed, as some venture to judge, in a singular form. It seems as if wrought into an elaborate mosaic, most carefully designed, compacted, and finished in all its details, The thought, too, may not unnaturally suggest itself, that this peculiar method of representing a purely spiritual transaction is singularly adapted to persons of methodical habits and tastes, to business men ac-

customed to the calculations and the order of commercial life, and, in general, to the judicial, legal type of soul. There is yet another consideration : those to whom the announcements are addressed are supposed, at the moment, to be possessed with fear, well-grounded fear. They dread the righteous anger of God, they can plead no excuse for their violations of His law, and can do nothing for their own escape from the hands of justice. But here is a plan, laid out and completed, which perfectly meets everything which can be urged against them.

This peculiarity is exceedingly marked. A general assurance of pardon from the lips of God would require, on the part of man, mere trust, simple faith. But it is not so here. On every side, not only explanation, but most full, minute, and exact explanation is given. God's procedure is not only vindicated, it is demonstrated to be correct, politically, judicially, even commercially correct, in every point, to the very letter. Hence amazement, almost indignation, is expressed, when a thing so perfect and so plain is called in question. "What more can you desire? it is asked. Your debt is cancelled; you owe nothing. Your burden is laid on the shoulders of another; you are free. Your punishment has been endured; you have nothing to fear. God has provided for everything, and you have only to accept His free grace." It

seems the perfection of intelligibility and simplicity. It fits in at every point to all the exigencies of the case, like a wax impression to the seal by which it is made. It is so critically balanced and adapted and dovetailed, that you can discover no redundance and no defect, no chink and no flaw. Two and two are four is not more conclusive, more sure. It is all, and more than all, that the most scrupulous or the most exacting could desire, so easily understood, yet so perfect, meeting all that God can demand, and answering to the utmost wants and wishes of the world.

If there be a fault here at all, it must be on the side of perfection, not of deficiency. Dare we ask, is it not too perfect, too secure, too exact, and may it not be on this very account more human than divine? Is the suspicion quite inadmissible, that it may owe more than we sometimes imagine, to human ideas of construction, and to human modes of making out and filling up a system? When the mind is allowed to throw itself fearlessly and freely over it, as a whole, some possibilities, even probabilities, amounting to all but certainties, perforce, suggest themselves. That reigning thought of compensation, and that judicial, almost business-method of dealing with spiritual evil, which are so prominent, were of all things likely to be

welcomed by a Judaism, itself corrupt and prepared to yield to the infection of surrounding Paganism. Still further, they could not be distasteful in the ages which witnessed not only the germs, but the early blossomings of the future dogmas, of indulgence, and penance, and satisfaction, when sins were weighed and measured, and had their fixed price, in suffering or in money, or in both. Besides, they met the strong, distinctive taste of the times of Ambrose and Jerome, the era of holy places, relics, pilgrimages, of monachism, fastings, scourgings, and all voluntary self-inflictions. They were in harmony with the entire spirit and genius and usages of the Papacy, with its greed of outward material guarantees and symbols, on the one hand, and its ritual and dogmatic punctiliousness, on the other hand. They distinctly suited the characteristic tendencies of individual celebrities in all the ages,—say, of such a man as Augustin, whether we look to the peculiar cast of his mind, or to his early personal history; or of such a man as Anselm, the head of fully-developed scholasticism; or even of the early reformers, several of whom were worshippers of Aristotle and masters of logic. Last of all, in times of deep and wide-spread barbarism, among the masses of the European people, when kings, and nobles, and soldiers were utterly un-

taught, but chivalrously honourable and valiant, according to the code then accepted, it is not hard to see, that an artificial and very formally perfect *scheme* of salvation, simply as such, but still more as based on the material idea of compensation and satisfaction, on the exact adjustment of divine and human claims, on the maintenance of the untarnished honour of the Most High, on the satisfaction of stern justice, and on the palpable ground of judicial, even commercial proceedings, must have commended itself with extraordinary force. It did, and all the earlier, as well as later protesters against Rome, carried with them much of this distinguishing element of Roman doctrine. Is it unreasonable to conceive, that it may be owing to kindred influences that the idea has been so long, and is still most devoutly retained by good and wise men?

“A God all mercy were a God unjust.” The Almighty is infinitely righteous, and infinitely faithful to His character, to His law, and to the interests of His moral government. But suppose an individual to be thoroughly satisfied of these positions, and convinced, besides, that God can never forgive sin, except in perfect consistency with His character, His government, and His law, and yet, at the same time, to be able, on the authority of Scripture, to trust simply in divine pardon, quite

unaided by any details of explanation. Wherein lies the difference between him and his fellow-Christians? Is it not in this mainly—indeed, in this entirely and only? that he has not found, as they profess to have found in the New Testament, an explanation, and that he does not even think it becoming or wise to seek an explanation of the way in which forgiveness is supposed to be proved consistent with equity and with law—the way in which, it is alleged, sin is expiated, justice satisfied, and the honour of God upheld. He has not the shadow of a doubt that forgiveness is perfectly consistent with divine rectitude and divine law, but he does not see or appreciate the way in which, it is said, this consistency is exhibited, and he is convinced that others are mistaken in imagining that they see this way. The great underlying truths, divine forgiveness and divine righteousness, are precisely the same to both. The sole difference is this, that the one professes to understand the details of the plan of Heaven, the other does not; the one thinks he has discovered the grounds of God's procedure, the other is ignorant, and content to be ignorant, of them.

Apart from any knowledge of what is commonly styled "the way of salvation," it may be humbly but firmly believed, on the testimony of the Sacred Scrip-



tures, that the infinitely holy and just and wise is also the forgiving and loving God. By the one true sacrifice made by God for men, when He incarnated Himself in His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, by the unutterable love unveiled in that Incarnation, and in the whole life, and in the cross of the Incarnate, by the words and the acts and the meek endurances and the outbreathing spirit of Jesus, and by the secret, inward working of the Holy Spirit in his heart, a man shall come to place a simple trust in divine forgiveness, as profound as his nature is capable of putting forth. He shall see that the great Father of the soul only seeks its return to Himself, and only waits to respond to the first look it casts back, the first relenting thought, the first stirring of desire towards the home and the heart above. He asks, he wants no more than this. Anything beyond, which some have professed to discover, only complicates to him, and confuses, a divine simplicity, darkens his notions of truth and of God, and throws his mind into the deepest perplexity. The supposed revelation of a plan, such as has been imagined, associates itself in his mind invincibly with what is not only not worthy of God, but is very dishonouring.

Grace, which is purchased and paid for, must lose not only its special beauty, but even its

essential worth. There may be exceeding loving-kindness in the effort to secure the purchase, but when the price has been duly paid down, and when what remains is a simple act of justice, we look in vain for the subduing element of pure love. A creditor may be at the utmost pains to find a substitute who shall advance payment of a debt; but if the debt be fully cancelled, the debtor is free, not by grace, but by justice. An injured person may interest himself exceedingly in the wrong-doer, and may labour to find some third party who shall be willing to bear his punishment; but if ample compensation for the injury has been made, and if the fullest satisfaction has been rendered to all the demands of justice and of law, it can be no grace to set the wrong-doer free,—he is free by right. Is it not more beautiful, more noble, more honouring to God, to be conquered by His unveiled love in the Incarnation and the cross; to rely upon it, without a question, and to trust in pure, mere spontaneous grace, rather than in grace purchased, explained, vindicated, and demonstrated to be all consistent.

It is imagined that the forgiveness of sin is a thing of transcendent difficulty, a difficulty so great that it almost baffled even God to surmount it. I venture to assert that there is not a solitary text which conveys, or even favours, this idea. If there be

meaning in the New Testament, it is, of all things, clear and sure that God is infinitely willing to forgive the wickedest human being that lives. Wherever difficulty may lie, at least it does not lie here. Thinking so much, as many do, of mere pardon and its difficulties, they forget that pardon is not salvation: not at all. There is a far sterner obstruction in the way of the real deliverance of the human spirit, an obstruction which only God can remove in His holy love, but which must be removed, if the soul is to be saved. Were mere pardon of sin secured, the whole of what constitutes inner salvation would still remain to be achieved. If all the past were blotted out from God's remembrance, the man would be as unredeemed as ever. It is his nature, and not the facts of his history, that require to be, or that can be, changed. There is a deadly evil working within, and it is from this he must be saved, if he is to be saved at all. A true salvation is not escape from the consequences of sin present or remote; it is not this at all; it is only and wholly deliverance from sin itself, from that deep, internal cause which entails such consequences, be they what they may. The root of perdition in the soul must be struck at and destroyed; and only in so far as this is struck, and no farther, is real safety achieved. The self-will in resistance to the divine will, the false

bias of the spiritual nature, the conscious, voluntary want of harmony with truth and right and love and God, this is a true death, if there were none else in the future. This is eternal death begun. To have life planted, where this death has reigned, is true salvation,—nothing else is.

Mere selfish protection is not the chief want of a genuine soul. The very lowest, the weakest and the least noble thing we can do, is to beg for escape from the proper desert of evil. This may not be vice, but it is still less virtue, and has nothing great, nothing exalting, nothing purifying in it. Selfish fear is a contemptible, degrading, and enfeebling emotion, and by making so much of this principle, by encouraging and pampering and almost honouring it, the danger is that we emasculate religion in its very birth. To an enlightened, awakened, and thoroughly earnest man, the great and stern reality is this, that he has deeply wronged his God, and as deeply wronged his own being. God endowed him with a spiritual nature, gave it sacredly into his charge, and he is conscious that he has neglected and injured it, perhaps irreparably, injured it by separating it from the one source of purity and life and joy. He is away from his God, in thought and in affection, and this wilful severance, he has come to know, is death to his

higher self. He is all wrong, utterly wrong, wrong in relation to God and wrong in relation to himself. What he most needs, is not to be pardoned; that may be his first, but it ought to be his least concern, respecting which there is no reasonable ground for fear or doubt; what he most needs is, not to be pardoned merely, but to be changed in himself, to be set really right, his face and his heart turned towards God, converted to God.

The germ of new divine life in any human mind is trust, a penitent turning of the heart to God, a simple, humble faith in God's forgiveness. This is the early promise and the cause of a profound change within. This is saving faith; not because it secures a formal legal acquittal from the Great Judge, about which we know and can know nothing, but on a far more intelligible and true ground, because it really saves our nature, turns it right away from the death which it was confronting and right towards God, who is our only life. In the New Testament faith is called the justifying, that is, the rectifying, the rightening principle, because it literally and thoroughly rightens, sets right the soul, which before was utterly wrong. The humbled, penitent nature is drawn back, and of itself turns back, *converts*—to use the very word of inspiration and in the very sense which inspiration gives it—

to God. "For what law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God"—has done—"sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin has condemned"—doomed, killed—"sin in the flesh." The flesh, the carnal will was proof against mere law, mere authority, and trampled it under foot. The voice of command, even though it were God's, was powerless, and the flesh proudly triumphed over it. But the voice of love is omnipotent. Incarnate, crucified love overmasters sin in the flesh, condemns it, dooms it to death, kills it outright. The first stroke of this divine weapon is mortal, and the final victory, though won by slow degrees, is infallibly certain.

The mightiest antagonist of human sin, and its surest conqueror, is that divine power, a purely spiritual power, which concentrates itself in the Incarnation and the cross, that divine influence which descends, through these, on the hearts of men. In the New Testament, this power is represented in manifold forms, but ever with the same essential meaning. It is light, it is life, it is peace, it is a guiding star of hope, it is a healing balm; and in one exquisitely beautiful and simple passage, it is described as a cleansing virtue. "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, then have we fellowship

one with another"—God with us, and we with God—"and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth"—is ever cleansing—"us from all sin." "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves;" ever and again we are drawn down into darkness, we fall into sin, and fellowship with the luminous and the holy is for the time impossible. But there is a power, streaming from the cross into the soul, which is ever washing it afresh; bidding away the darkness; cleansing out the evil; renewing the holy fellowship; and restoring us to God. In a world full of pollution, and, for human hearts, ever prone to evil, and often actually darkened and defiled, there is one mysterious and mighty institute of purification. It is symbolised in the cross. Love, the love of God, is the spiritual antidote to human sin, but not love alone, and not even God's love, simply as such, but self-sacrificing love, incarnate, crucified love,—love which has wept over men, which has groaned, and bled, and died for men—love streaming out in the life-blood of the Loving One. It is a fact, not a dogma, the fact of profoundest, mental experience, which lies in these inspired words—"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, is cleansing us from all sin." It is, it ever is, cleansing us—a present, invincible virtue goes forth from it to beget in us a wonderful abhorrence of evil, and a wonderful long-

ing for purity, and to renew the defiled soul to humble, loving obedience. It was this which first overmastered the stubborn will, and drew it to the feet of God; and it is this which, ever and ever, unveils to spiritual vision the dark atrocity of all sin, and the nobility and beauty of all goodness. There is here no nominal, formal acquittal from charges which, nevertheless, abide just; there is no imaginary, judicial whitening of a surface which, underneath, is as foul as ever. But there is a real, a thorough, and a deep washing out of sin itself, and making the heart literally clean and pure. In the light of this fact of earthly experience, we may better understand the destined course of the heavenly life to come. A divine beauty and an infinite meaning gleam forth to us from the words of the anthem of eternity—"Unto Him that loved us, and *washed* us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even His Father—unto Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen!"



## CHAPTER III.

### SPIRITUAL LAWS.

Their Sphere—Material Laws—Not Eternal and not Necessary—  
Ordained by God—Spiritual Laws Immutable—In Harmony  
with Will of God—Their Ground—Human Laws—Need Vin-  
dication and Support—Self-sustaining Law—Sin and Death  
—Holiness and Life—Divine Sacrifice—Destroys Sin—Saves  
the Soul.



LAW is the expression of will, and has its ground in authority. Authority, supposing adequate power, ultimately rests on rectitude and wisdom. Intelligence demands, and, in union with power, secures order, not chance; fixed order, not irregularity and uncertainty; righteous and wise methods directed to righteous and wise results. The universe of matter and of mind is stable, in the reign of divine laws. Life and light, beautiful and glorious in themselves, are resplendent in the laws which go to their production and govern all their phenomena. In the physical region, no resistance is possible, and law reigns serenely and supremely. But in the spiritual sphere, the created will has run counter to the divine will, and darkness and death have supplanted light and life. The spiritual universe has witnessed defiance of law, on the one side, and an intervention above law, on the other side.

There are two great facts, in all time, Incarnation and human sin, which, on opposite grounds, stand out from the sphere of established order. The first

transcends all laws, material and spiritual. It violates none, it crosses the path of none, for it is alone, in a region of its own, beyond the range of so-called law. It is a solitary, independent act of the Great Lawgiver, with which no power or will but His has a right to intermeddle. Human sin, on the other hand, has erected itself within the kingdom, which is subject to the laws of spirit and of matter. But it is an anomaly in that kingdom, a foreign and hostile intrusion; and, so far as it extends, it aims to defy established authority, and to disown and cast off all subjection, and is outside the sphere within which law reigns. Nothing can ever explain or account for sin. It is disorganisation, rebellion, disease. Its radical idea is that it is inexplicable, because a violation of all rational order and of all right principles. Incarnation is supernatural; human sin is unnatural, or anti-natural. The one transcends, the other overthrows, law; the one comes down from above, in the majesty of light and love, the other comes up out of the nether darkness, like a fetid vapour, a pestilential breath from the bottomless pit. But a profound relation enwraps these two antagonistic powers in its embrace,—the transcendental is the subverter, the divinely-selected subverter of the infernal mystery.

The one fact on which our thoughts are now

to be concentrated is this—that, in spite of what transcends their range, on the one side, and of what seems, but only seems, to trample them down on the other side, spiritual laws are mighty, are almighty. They cannot be violated, cannot even be resisted, that is, with impunity, and without exacting an incipient and immediate satisfaction. The reign of law, in all the departments of the material creation, is proclaimed with extraordinary confidence, by those who have devoted themselves to the study of physics. “The order of nature” is the chosen phrase to denote a fixity which is imagined to be unlimited in extent and absolutely immovable. But equal confidence is not felt in the universality and supremacy of spiritual laws. Very far otherwise. And yet, if there be a ground of hesitation at all, it will not be hard to make out, that it is, at least, stronger on the material, than on the spiritual side.

The course of nature in the past is ascertainable within certain limits. So far as observation can reach, in all the various departments, we are able to discover invariable sequence; and it is perfectly reasonable to presume that what has thus been, will indefinitely continue to be. That is the presumption, a most legitimate presumption; that is the probability, a high and strong probability. But to maintain that what

has been must be and cannot but be; in other words, to convert a presumption, a probability into a necessity, the contrary of which would be impossible, is a gross error. Manifestly, the premises do not sustain the conclusion, the reasoning is false at the root. What has been is certain, but it is no whit less clear, that what shall be, cannot, to us, be absolutely certain. No amount of experience in the past can render a divergence from the hitherto observed order, however improbable, either contradictory or impossible—impossible, that is to say, in the nature of things. That which is neither contradictory nor impossible may take place, and however strong the presumption against it be, we can never be rationally certain that a fact directly opposed to our past experience shall not arise to confound anticipation, and to overturn, in that instance, the idea of the inviolable uniformity of nature. Whoever believes, I say, not in an Incarnation, but in a Creation, has in this realised the vastest departure possible from antecedent uniformity. Admitting the greater, it would be in the face of all reason to deny the possibility, or sufficient evidence being produced, the reality of the less. Credulity, ignorant, indiscriminating reception of what contradicts ordinary experience, is a culpable weakness, but illogical, arrogant, almost fanatical devotion to the idea of

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necessity in the order of nature is more criminal still, if not more weak.

The laws of the material universe are infinitely wise and good, but they are not in themselves necessary and immutable, even as they are not eternal. The consistent Theist, who holds them to be the very wisest and best possible, is satisfied, at the same time, that there are ten thousand conceivable arrangements, which might, without any contradiction, have taken the place of those now existing. The number, the magnitudes, the distances of the stars, the size of our globe, its place in the solar system, the substances of which it is composed, chemical proportions, affinities and combinations and their results, the mineral, vegetable, irrational, and rational kingdoms, all might have been other than they are, without any contradiction, had it so pleased the Creator.

It is far otherwise, it is diametrically the reverse, with the great laws of the spiritual universe. They are what they are, of themselves, of necessity. Moral good and moral evil are immutable, and never were and never can be other than they are, in the slightest degree. Veracity, fidelity, rectitude, purity, lovingness, are for ever good, and their opposites are for ever bad. To all rightly constituted moral beings, everywhere and always, they are unchangeably the

same. Altogether apart from any choice or judgment external to them, these qualities are for ever good, and their opposites are for ever bad. It lies in the essential, eternal nature of things that they are what they are, and could never have been, and never can be different. The distinction is as wide as it is possible to conceive. The laws of nature are owing solely to the will and the fiat of the Creator. He ordained them, and had such been His pleasure they might have been altered in ten thousand ways. But the laws of the spiritual universe do not depend even on the highest will. The Great God did not make them, they are eternal as He is. The Great God could not repeal them, they are immutable as He is. In perfect harmony with the divine will, they are nevertheless independent even of it, and as they were not created, so they cannot be annulled or altered, even by the Almighty.

Truthfulness is admitted to be a virtue, a spiritual excellence, a beautiful, exalting, noble characteristic of a responsible being. Untruthfulness is admitted to be a vice, a corrupting, degrading, mean quality in a soul. But let us understand the force of the admission. Are these things so, because God has enjoined the virtue and forbidden the vice? By any opposite utterance, from Creator or creature,



might truthfulness have become vice, and untruthfulness virtue? It is impossible to believe that, to any rightly constituted rational and moral being, these qualities can be other than they are in themselves. Simple, perfect truthfulness is necessarily, eternally virtue; untruthfulness is necessarily, eternally vice. These qualities are owing to no arrangement, no command, no will of any creature. Even the divine will is not their ground. They rest immovably upon their own foundation, independently of all authority or judgment besides. And this conclusion bears with equal force on all spiritual excellences whatever and their opposite vices. Rectitude, purity, lovingness, piety towards God, reverence, submission, self-surrender, love, are beautiful and good in themselves; they are beautiful and good, unchangeably, eternally; they have their ground in the essential constitution of moral being, and are thus separated by an impassable line from all material properties and laws, for these are not in themselves unalterable, not eternal, not necessary, and the God who in wisdom ordained them might, had it so pleased Him, have instituted a different code of regulative principles.

Spiritual laws, widely distinguished from material laws, are separated by a still vaster difference, from merely human ordinances and arrangements. The

laws of men are different, at different times and in different countries, are often altered, often repealed. It is a necessity of their origin, that they must be more or less unwise and unjust. As the work of imperfect beings, they must at the best be imperfect, and must need to be constantly reviewed and improved. There is indeed a majesty, a sanctity, even in human law, as the collective wisdom and conscience of a nation and an age. With all its imperfections, this is among the highest and sacrest of human things, and the bulwark of society against injustice and universal anarchy. For the sake of the interests of all, it is indispensable that human laws be respected, and when broken, be vindicated and avenged. A law set at nought with impunity, or so inconstantly and feebly enforced, that the chances of escape or punishment are nearly equally balanced, becomes a dead letter, affording no protection to the virtuous, and inspiring the vicious with no salutary terror.

There is another consideration still; with the wisest and most righteous of human ordinances, it will happen that the innocent are punished, and that the guilty, by one means or another, escape detection or conviction. At the best, there is an inevitable uncertainty in them, a doubtfulness and a degree of untrustworthiness, which tend to shake

confidence and materially to weaken the foundations of authority. On this account, the laws of men, in all that is manifestly right, need the utmost possible support. Wherever guilt is clearly established human justice must take its course, unless the dearest interests of society are to be wantonly sacrificed.

But on no such grounds as these, nor on any other grounds whatever, do spiritual ordinances need or admit of either vindication, or protection, or support from human or divine hands. Defender or avenger they have none, and they need none. Without aid from any quarter they avenge themselves, and exact, and continue without fail to exact so long as the evil remains, the amount of penalty—visible and invisible—to the veriest jot and tittle, which the deed of violation deserves. Essentially and perfectly wise and right, they are irresistible, in the case of the obedient and the rebellious alike. There is no formal trial of the criminal, there is no need for investigating the question and determining the amount of guilt or of innocence. Without inquiry and without effort each case discovers and exposes itself. No judicial verdict is pronounced, and no officer of justice is appointed to carry out the sentence, but at once, punishment or reward, visible or invisible, or both, dispenses

itself, and in the amount in which either is merited. Spiritual laws are self-acting; with all their penalties and sanctions they are immediately self-acting, and without the remotest possibility of failure or mistake.

Sin is death—holiness is life; these brief sentences, taken out of inspired Scripture, are a condensation of the code of the spiritual universe. They constitute the basis of the reigning principles of the divine moral administration, they are without limit, without exception, and are absolutely irresistible. But it must be noted, that they are not so much sanctions ordained by God, as simple statements of fact, the statement of an eternal fact, embodying the literal history of all the past, and a predictive announcement of all the future, for ever and ever. Sin is death—holiness is life; the fact is so, and the law of moral being is promulgated in the fact. The forces of the spiritual universe, like the attributes of the Eternal mind, are absolutely independent and self-sufficient. The Great Being did not elect that this and that perfection should enrich His nature; they did enrich it from eternity and are coeval with Himself. God did not elect and ordain that sin should be death, and that holiness should be life, when, but for this ordination, they might have been something else.

In itself, sin is death; in itself, holiness is life—must be so, cannot be anything else, and must be this. It is a necessary, eternal fact, independent of all beings and all things. But in a case of unutterable importance, where ignorance or mistake would have been everlastingly fatal, God has been at pains to set the fact before his rational creatures, and to invest it with the solemnity of a direct and repeated message from His throne, and with all the authority of His express sanction. First of all, it is written within every soul of man, for the voice is divine which we hear, in the depths of our spiritual nature, and it is a divine witness who makes His appeal to us, in the conscious effects of evil in ourselves, and its visible consequences on others around and in the general world. And then, it is a divine authority which utters itself emphatically and clearly in the holy volume. The great laws of the moral universe are there announced in a thousand passages and in varying forms, as the substance and the sum, the meaning and the spirit of all revelation.

Truthfulness, rectitude, purity, lovingness, and all the virtues, reverence of God, submission, self-surrender, and love to Him and all godly principles and affections, constitute the true life of a responsible soul. They not only belong to it, but they

are the essential constituents of its vitality; they are the life-blood of a created spirit, and to touch any of them is to affect the very seat and spring of vitality. The slightest admission of evil—conscious, voluntary evil—is a direct assault on soul-life. It is like impurity, taint in the blood; it is soul-death begun—a commencing process of disorder, pollution, disease, whose only issue, unless it be stopped, is death. We are accustomed to think of crime perpetrated, and then, perhaps long after, of punishment adjudicated and inflicted. But moral evil and death, and, equally so, holiness and life, are perfectly simultaneous. Not that the punishment of sin is the work of a moment. There is an entail of moral, it may be even of physical punishment, which is prolonged so long as its cause abides, and which can be cut off, not always even by the extirpation of the cause. But in the very act, in the very moment of evil, the real penalty descends irresistibly, and in the very amount, which is deserved. The sin ensures, because it is, its own punishment. The taint enters in it, and, along with it, into the spirit. The poison is shed the instant the sting penetrates. The process of disease and death is begun. The smallest conscious, voluntary evil in the human will, the smallest sin is in its nature, death—moral death. Without doubt, the

assault on soul-life is greater or less, in proportion to the amount and the kind of evil admitted ; but the smallest sin is moral death begun, and moral perdition must be the issue, unless the sin be cast forth.

Death, even in the body, but much more in the soul, is a process, as well as an event consummated ; rather, so far as concerns the spirit of man, it is only a process, and never an event consummated. We are led astray by the supposed analogy between animal and spiritual death—an analogy clear and just within certain limits, but thoroughly false if extended beyond them. The animal life is completely extinguished by death, the animal system is completely dissolved, the animal economy is for ever broken up and ended. That power which, at a precise moment, puts an end to animal life, we call death. The fact, single and alone, that animal life is quenched, we call death. And hence, not unnaturally, but quite untruly, the death of the soul suggests a thing completed and done with, even as the death of the body is a fact accomplished—a thing of the past, to which nothing remains except to become matter of history. But it is far otherwise ; even in the case of the animal life, though its final extinction be a fact, the fact of a moment, there is first of all, a process leading to this last result. Dying may be a long previous process, continued for

months or years. It is even believed that in the first moment of life, the seed of ultimate death is planted, and that through our whole animal existence, by the side of the process of life, there is an antagonistic process of death, which in one form or another, and through one aid or another, at length gains the mastery, and extinguishes its rival. However this be, death in a human spirit, that is, moral death, is unquestionably a process; and, so far as we can judge, only a process, and never, an event consummated—a process going forward, year after year in this life, which only Almighty mercy can terminate. In the case of the finally reprobate, in whom the direst form of this penalty is realised, it is believed that spiritual becomes eternal death, that is, an unending process of dying, to which no termination or consummation is possible.

It is easy to see that when the process of moral death is begun in the soul that sinneth—and it always is inevitably begun—and when that process is continued—and it always is inevitably continued, (working out also during its continuance, as it does and must, varied physical evil,) so long as sin remains, and to the extent in which it remains—the spiritual laws of the universe have their full effect, their proper penalty is borne to the letter,



and each claim which they prefer is met and honoured as it falls due. They seek and need no supplementary support from any quarter whatever, but are perfectly able to sustain themselves at every moment. All they demand is this, that wherever and so long as and in the degree in which sin exists, there also shall be death, moral death, and this is the simple, universal fact.

The favourite human expedient of commutation can have no place in the spiritual government of the universe. Even on earth, and in the administration of human laws, this is always, essentially, an imperfection and a dishonour. The sentence of death shall be changed into banishment for life, or the banishment shall be only for a limited term, or a shorter shall be substituted for a longer period, or banishment shall be changed into imprisonment, or this again shall be commuted into a fine in money. But always the reason is simply this, that the sentence of the law is judged, on one ground or other, to be too severe, and that its faithful execution would amount to practical injustice. That which is strictly legal is not always perfectly equitable. Alleviating circumstances arise which, though unrecognised by the law, are clearly valid to a certain extent. A discretionary power, therefore, within certain limits is wisely allowed. The

undue rigour of human laws is tempered, special cases are met, and unforeseen circumstances of great weight are duly recognised. Among men, and considering what human things are, the expedient of commutation is, on many accounts, very desirable, and even necessary. But the very grounds which make it becoming in human administration, render it impossible to the course of spiritual law. God cannot change His mind, as man does and ought. God cannot, like man, be now disposed to severity, and again relent to a more patient and tender mood. God cannot mistake in the first instance, as man does; and cannot, like man, need to review and correct His sentence. No unforeseen circumstance can ever arise to justify or require a modification of spiritual law; it is based on infinite prevision, and on eternal rectitude and truth; it contemplates all possible cases, and cannot, without dishonour, admit of the smallest exception.

Among the distinctive imperfections of human administration, there is another, which, by contrast, illuminates the righteous government of God. Codes of law of necessity specify particular offences, and profess to give an exhaustive enumeration of the criminal acts to which they refer, to ordain the respective punishments with which these acts shall be visited, and to determine the duration of such punishments.

When, in any instance, the decreed punishment has been borne, and when the decreed time has expired, the offender is perfectly free in the eye of the law. But, in this respect, between divine and human administration, there is, instead of analogy, the widest distinction. No catalogue of offences is given here, and no specific penalties for different kinds of crime are decreed. The law of God deals not with sins so much as with sin, not even with acts, so much as with the one inner spring of action, the one root of all sin—the evil will, the corrupt, false bias of the nature. Instead of multiplied and various punishments for different crimes—arbitrary punishments, inasmuch as they are fixed by the judgment and the will of human lawgivers—in the divine law, one unchangeable, universal penalty, equally applicable to all possible crimes, is decreed. Sin is death! No matter who the culprit be, or what the kind of crime or where committed, or what the circumstances, if it be sin, and so far as it is sin, it is death. Any sin, all sin, according to its degree, and so long as it continues, is death, moral death—but not unattended with varied physical penalties in this life. No term of punishment is fixed, none can be fixed. One thing, and one thing only, determines the duration of the punishment, and that is the continuance of evil in the soul. The evil continuing its attendant penalty is a neces-

sity, which even God could not conquer. Sin is punishment, and punishment lies in the nature of sin. Led astray by the analogies of human administration, we imagine that a long and dark array of conscious or forgotten sins, as yet unpunished, is loudly witnessing against us, and calling for righteous retribution. And it is true, strictly true, that so long as sin is within us, it must continue not only to call for retribution, but to bring down its penalty, as at the first. But it is equally true, that no sin is, or ever can be, unpunished a moment, because it ever and instantly punishes itself. Human law fails to discover the evil-doer, and wearied with vain searching, it goes to sleep, and is robbed of its due for years, or for ever. But spiritual law never slumbers, and is never defrauded for a moment. That which God calls sin is never undiscovered, and never for an instant fails to meet its desert. The moment of sin is the moment of death in the soul. God has no unsettled accounts, no outstanding claims. The process of perdition begins without fail, and deepens with the duration and the amount of sin. A terrific future is in reserve, because now we see only the germ; hereafter the last dread perfection of development. But the present exacts all its rights. Spiritual law carries out its sentence at once and to the letter, and allows no claim for an instant to be dishonoured.

We are entitled to come to this distinct conclusion, that the great governing principles of the divine administration need no support beyond themselves, and no vindication. They are for ever equal to their own maintenance. The idea of exculpating or justifying the laws of the spiritual universe—above all, of upholding their inviolable authority—would be to add insult to injury, as if they were incapable of defending and avenging themselves. They do not need help, they do not admit of it; the thing is an impossibility. So thoroughly do they insure the infliction of merited punishment, that any attempt of that nature would be as useless as it would be presumptuous. It would impute weakness to that which is divinely strong, and it would suppose and create the suspicion of a need of help which did not exist. It would impeach God himself. All divine laws, material and spiritual alike, are sufficient for themselves. Only human laws need vindication and support. Among men, where the administration of justice is ever imperfect, and where criminals, by one means or other, contrive to evade and escape from justice, there is the most urgent necessity for upholding the majesty of the law, and for vindicating it by impressive examples, perhaps even by extraordinary expedients. But there is no evading the dire sanction of spiritual laws, no possible escape from their retributive awards, and

therefore there is no need in their case of vindication or defence. Even the laws of the material universe know nothing of the remotest possibility of resistance or evasion or escape within their several range. We are said to resist them, but it is by implicitly yielding to them. We are said to force them to our will, to convert them to our purposes, and to render them serviceable to our interests and our aims, instead of being, as they otherwise would be, hostile and destructive. But the simple fact is, that all the while a more extensive familiarity with them only strengthens the conviction that they must be obeyed to the letter. To resist them really is impossible, without paying the full penalty of infraction. Without fail they avenge themselves, and need no help from us or from any quarter whatever. What a burlesque it would be, what insanity to profess to vindicate and uphold the laws of nature ! And can it be less than an insult to the great Being to imagine, that what would be folly in regard to them is a matter of fact in regard to the higher laws of spirit, as if they somehow were in danger, and needed to be vindicated, sustained, and defended ? Can it be less than an insult to the Great Being to imagine, that a dishonour and a weakness which inhere nowhere, except in the imperfect constitutions of human society, must attach to the eternal principles of His universe.

There is ground for very reverent caution, lest in thinking to honour God we should do Him deep dishonour and injustice,—lest in the idea that His laws are insufficient for themselves, and therefore need extraneous support and defence, we should strike a damaging blow at their authority, and undermine the sacred foundation on which they rest. The verdict of Heaven is this, as unambiguous and determinate as words can express it, “The soul that sinneth shall die.” It is true; it must be true. God cannot speak with a double meaning. What He declares He must intend,—simply intend, and in the sense which the words plainly convey. His verdict against sin, the penalty which He announces it shall incur, is and must be a literal truth. “The soul that sinneth shall die,” He has declared, and as a simple matter of fact, the soul that sinneth does die. To the extent and in the degree in which it sins, it does die; to this extent and degree the seat of inner life is assailed. In sinning, and by sinning, it dies inevitably. With sin the seed of death is planted; and from that moment, in its noblest part, it is no more a living, but a dying, soul, unless and until an antagonist process of recovery be commenced within it. The veracity of God is unimpeachable, and the law of the spiritual universe is vindicated, verified, honoured, to the fullest possible extent, by itself. It

is sufficient for itself, needs no avenger, and stands erect in its own inviolable majesty. God himself could not annul the sequence, sin and death ; could not dissolve this dire connexion, could not shield from the penalty, except by removing its cause.

There is one, but there is only one, way in which the tremendous doom of the sinful soul can be escaped, in consistency with the great laws of the spiritual universe. If sin were cast out, the death which issues solely from sin would be effectually prevented. If the internal seat and seed of evil were crushed and killed, the outgrowth from it would certainly perish. If the fatal disease itself were checked and cured, then, but only then, a restorative, healing process might take the place of an ever-deepening perdition, for the same law which announces that sin is death, proclaims also that holiness is life. If sin were extirpated and expelled, and if love of God and of good were planted in its stead, then the true redemption of the human spirit would be secure. There is one salvation for man, only one ; a salvation not from hell, but from sin ; not from consequences here or hereafter, but from the deep cause itself which is secreted within the nature. The work of God is not so much to pardon the past as to kill outright an evil which is present. The divinest work of God on this earth is



the destroying of evil. By the one true sacrifice of Christ, an act of divine self-sacrifice, by incarnate, crucified love, He aims a blow at the root of evil within man's heart. The subsequent process is endlessly diverse, and is tedious and slow, but the issue is certain,—the death of sin. God touches the deadly disease at its foul source and heals it. He breaks the hard heart by the overwhelming pressure of pure, almighty mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ. He kindles a new divine life, which is holiness; the resolute, free, glad choice of truth and of good. Spiritual law triumphs in the new life, as in the previous death. God slays the sin, and thus saves the soul. He destroys death by implanting life.



## CHAPTER IV.

### ETERNAL JUSTICE.

Opposite Conceptions of Justice—Providence—Inequalities, Real  
Equality—Mere Justice—Not in God—A Human Notion—  
God always More and Better than Merely Just—Justice and  
Mercy—Evil, Not of God—Moral, Physical Evil—Ethical  
Nature of God and Man—Mercy Loftier, Holier than Justice  
—Inevitable Doom of Sin—Triumph of Mercy.



FROM law to justice, from spiritual laws to justice in God, the transition is direct and short. Spiritual laws are grounded in the eternal rectitude and wisdom, and the effect of their operation is the necessary reign of perfect equity in the universe. Amidst all the evils that spring out of human sin, God's ways are ever equal, only man's ways are unequal. But the most opposite impressions are awakened in different minds by the notion of such an attribute as justice in God, on the one side only repulsive, and on the other as strongly attractive. The difference is so great that it has been pronounced original and organic. Altogether, in the sphere of theology, the confident position is laid down, that men do not of themselves become, but are really born either Calvinists or Pelagians—using these names loosely and simply to mark two quite opposite poles of thought.

In a wider yet kindred sense, it is maintained that men are born either Aristotelians or Platonists. Not of choice, but in consequence of a real neces-

sity, occasioned by their individual structure, they are materialistic or spiritualistic, logical or philosophical, argumentative or intuitional ; the one and the other alike being the simple effect of original, mental conformation. The distinction, diverging more or less from its source, can readily be drawn out, to almost any extent of minuteness. Men are calculating and sceptical, or they are sympathetic and receptive ; rigid and narrow, or comprehensive, catholic, and free ; they are found to admire the harder, sterner virtues, or they are won by the nobler, gentler, finer qualities of the soul ; they limit themselves to the senses and to the range of the understanding, and to what can be submitted to its processes and decisions, or they love to ascend to the region of the supersensual, and covet intensely the higher revelations of a disciplined faith. The two orders are ever ranged on opposite sides, in theology, in philosophy, and in real life. Respecting the origin of the universe, the question of a First Cause, the Being and character of God, the introduction of evil into the universe, the nature of volition, the final destiny of man, as either the outcome of an unconditional decree, or simply a result of the use or abuse of moral liberty, they are always essentially divided, and in all, are rightly distinguished as positivists

or spiritualists. Explain it how we may, the distinction is undoubted, and in few directions is it more striking than in the opposite manner in which divine justice is regarded, and in the opposite sentiments it awakens in different minds.

The etymology and relations of the word "justice," entitle us to say that a straight line, an even balance, may be taken as the exact material symbol of this spiritual attribute. The slightest deflection from perfect straightness destroys the line. Justice is perfectly rectilineal, and means the rendering to every one his full desert without stint, but also without excess, not an iota more or less than his desert. It must be admitted on all hands that were even this, however poor and low, as a highest ideal, realised over the wide earth, were mere exact justice established as the universal rule of this world, the result would be a veritable millennium, compared with the existing condition of things. The deeds of atrocious injustice which are perpetrated everywhere, in Christian as well as in other lands; the horrible wrongs done by men, to the feelings, the character, the reputation, the property, the liberty, the persons, the lives, the bodies, and the souls of their fellow-men, defy computation. But these and untold enormous evils besides would be swept clean away, if only mere justice, no more,

rectilineal justice, were to reign supreme. There would be an eternal end to war, from which gigantic injustice on one side or other, or both, is inseparable, an eternal end to slavery, to rapine, to murder, to theft, and to all the darker crimes which now desolate and afflict mankind. Justice, mere justice, is entitled to stand high among the virtues, in the convictions of men, though it be dishonoured and prostrate in fact, as the world goes.

So far as the Great God is concerned, justice is administered even now on earth,—at the least, justice, never less than justice, though, often, usually, much more. Retribution, in the sense of evil, but far more, in the sense of good, is not wholly reserved for a future state of being. The present, it seems to be thought, is the scene only of preliminary probation, during which, as a matter of necessity, endless inequalities and injustices are permitted. The future, on the other hand, is a state of compensation, in which all that has been incomplete and defective here shall be filled up, and all that has seemed irregular or even wrong, shall be remedied and rectified, and in which the condition of every being shall righteously answer to his individual character and desert. But admitting a wide difference between the present and the future, it must not be imagined that there is not even now a God who



judgeth in the earth. To punish notorious offenders, to put down evil, to confound oppression and craft, and to shield, and save, and honour the good, the Most High comes forth, not seldom, out of His place and makes bare His holy arm. There is ground to believe, that in a wider sense still, and on ordinary occasions, and in the general, common movements of earthly providence, there is a very real, though not palpable adjustment of condition to desert, of actual life-experience to individual character.

It is not here meant, with manifold, plain facts before us, the idea is inadmissible that visible, outward, exact retribution is measured out to every individual, in this life. But it is meant, that with many seeming exceptions, it is yet marvellously true that men, even here on earth, get what they work for and aim at, what they really deserve, both in the way of punishment and in the way of reward. One of the memorable sentences of holy Scripture runs thus, "Be sure, your sin will find you out;" and your virtue also, we may add, whatsoever in you has been genuinely good, will not lose its reward. Few intelligent and observant persons can have failed to mark with wonder, to what an extent in later life, both the good and the evil of other days have returned upon them, most manifestly. The special early facts had been long past and forgotten, but

they came to life again in an undeniable resurrection, the book of fate was opened, the long outstanding account was at last made up, and a mystic finger pointed to the past date, the page, the very line. Justice does reign in the movements of providence here below—at all events never less than justice, but also, as we shall have to show, never mere rectilineal justice, neither less nor more.

In the eyes of some good men this virtue in its exact, even rigorous form, is a noble and right royal attribute. Nothing so befits and dignifies a governor, a judge, a king. It is the quality, which of all others, imparts consistency and firmness to character, and renders it reliable. There is no danger of contempt or insult to a ruler thus endowed; he is sure to be respected and trusted, and his administration will be a terror to evil-doers and a praise to the good. There are persons who, with such sentiments, deliberately elect to govern their lives mainly by considerations of exact justice. They admire it in others, and sedulously cultivate it in themselves. Generosity, properly so called, anything strictly spontaneous and impulsive, they rather discourage than cherish. Not strangers to generous sentiments, and not incapable, besides, of deeds of daring, of patient endurance and even of true self-sacrifice, what they appreciate far more highly in themselves and in others, is the reign

of law, exact obedience, stern justice, neither less nor more. On a far lower platform, and in ordinary life, multitudes without the lofty sentiments of the others, are strenuous for the letter of the law, acting, perhaps, up to what is outwardly required, but certainly not ambitious of a virtue, exceeding the limits of the precept. They are clamorous, in all cases, for law having its course, and loud in their praise of justice, inflexible justice, with an evident delight in the idea of inflexibility, as if to them there were a tone of majesty and grandeur in the very word. They are fond of asseverating, that if laws are to be revered and obeyed, they must be inflexibly executed. There must be no swerving, no flinching from the strict, stern rule of right, no unrighteous leniency, no wicked pity, which sets aside the holy claims of law, and in miserable regard for one, or for a few, cruelly places before thousands a powerful temptation to crime. In relation to their very standing before their Maker, these persons would admit nothing—they could not even respect God himself, were they called upon to admit anything, which did not harmonise with stern, inflexible justice. In the matter of their own future well-being, they must first see that the Almighty has, according to their ideas, sufficiently guarded the authority and the honour of His law, and has sufficiently met all the demands of

His justice, before they can feel entitled to trust themselves to divine, redeeming love.

There must be a profound and very serious misapprehension here. Directly, in the face of this state of mind, it can readily be shown that rectilineal justice, in the sense of apportioning exact desert, neither less nor more, is not an attribute of God at all, and cannot be. So far as the present world is concerned, there is not a single being who, at any moment, receives from God his exact desert, neither less nor more. The Great God is never unjust—that is impossible. He is never less than just; but He is, He always is, more than just. The Almighty never treats even the wickedest of His creatures on earth according to exact desert. Injustice, in the least imaginable taint, under any pretext, is infinitely far removed from Him; but mere justice, which limits itself to exact desert, is not only no attribute of the Most High, but it is wholly a human notion,—it belongs to men solely,—and it belongs to them solely because of their imperfection and their actual wickedness. A human judge must be influenced neither by clemency nor by revenge, and must act, in his judicial capacity, as if he were devoid of human impulses and sentiments, devoid even of volitions. He must be guided by no will of his own, and by no leaning to one side

or another. The ideal is, that he is the mere passive executor of a law which he did not make, but must absolutely enforce. It is essential to the stability and the order of society, that the law be carried out without favour or fear. On the one hand, such are the mass of mankind, so ready to take advantage of vacillation or of sympathy; and, on the other hand, so weak and evil are even the best of men, so constantly in danger of erring on the side of mercy, and no less so on the side of unjust anger and vindictive severity, that they must not be trusted. The public safety demands that they be either the compulsory victims, or the passive administrators of inflexible law.

The Great God is under none of these, nor any other necessities whatsoever. He has no cause to fear, or to guard against either the wickedness or the weakness of His creatures. He has no misgivings as to the immovable authority and the perfect vindication of His law, or as to the absolute stability of His government. He does not need to be, and He *is* not, just, in the human, rectilineal sense at all. He deals neither with the good nor with the bad, exactly according to their deservings. "The Lord is good unto all,"—be their character what it may,—to the vilest wretch, who pollutes the earth with his tread, and to the holiest saint, whose daily

life is like a breath from heaven. "The Lord is"—not just, not merely and strictly just, but—"good unto all; and His tender mercies are over all His works." "He maketh His sun to rise"—not on the good only, but—"on the evil and upon the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust." "Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . . who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." "The Lord is"—not simply and merely just, but far more and better than just, He is—"merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." "He visiteth the earth"—though it be laden with sin, and ever meriting chastisement and rebuke—"and watereth it. He greatly enricheth it with the river of God, which is full of water—He prepareth them corn, when He hath so provided for it—He watereth the ridges thereof abundantly—He settleth the furrows thereof—He maketh it soft with showers—He blesseth the springing thereof—He crowneth the year with His goodness, and His paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys are covered over with corn: they shout for joy—they also sing." Is this descrip-

tive of One, who is merely just, who carefully acts up to what law and justice demand, and exactly measures out to His creatures their desert, but no more? It certainly is not. "Love ye your enemies," said our blessed Lord, "and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest, for He is"—not simply just, but—"kind," and to whom? "unto the unthankful and the evil." "Be ye, therefore"—not simply just, but—"merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Justice, in the human, rectilineal sense, is no attribute of the God of the Bible. He is always merciful; and because He is merciful, He cannot be, and never is, simply, merely just. Always He is more and better than merely just, and acts on the ground of pure mercy. The whole course of the world, from the creation till now, and the manifest system of divine providence towards the good and towards the bad, are right in the face of the idea of rectilineal justice. There is no such attribute in God.

But the inevitable punishment of moral evil, always and everywhere, is certain nevertheless. The justice of the universe, in this sense, is a tremendous fact, an eternal and necessary fact, which even God could not set aside. There is an irresistible, a real force, springing out of the essential constitution of things, whereby sin punishes itself.

This is the fixed law of the moral universe, a law in perfect harmony with the eternal will, and which never is, and never can be broken. God's mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ, does not in the slightest degree set aside this justice; what it does is, to remove and render non-existent the only ground on which the claim of justice stands. Instead of arbitrarily withdrawing the criminal from punishment, it destroys in his soul that evil, which is the only cause and reason of punishment, and which being removed, punishment ceases of itself. The redeemed whom we picture in a future state, are they, not who have baffled and defeated and evaded justice, or who by some indirect, side method have succeeded in quieting its demands, but they in whom that sin, which justice does and must punish, has been pierced through and ultimately destroyed, and cast forth by incarnate love; they, in whom the moral disease which was preying upon their life has been stayed, and in whom a restorative healing process was begun and has been consummated.

As for the darker side of future being, it becomes us to speak with most reverent reserve. If the unredeemed shall be, as they shall and must be, separated from the redeemed, it can only be in consequence of an evil which no spiritual influences



could conquer.<sup>1</sup> Even the Great God cannot avert the penalty, except by destroying the sin. While sin continues to be the choice of the created will, punishment is inevitable. Divine mercy, having done its uttermost, to reconcile and subdue and save, is thenceforth powerless. The doom of the lost, be it whatever it may, is simply and wholly their own work. God has had and has no part in it whatever. It is all from first to last not only their doing, but their doing in despite of God. No deprivation and no evil which they suffer can be traced to Him. All is the simple effect, which no power in the universe could prevent, of that sin which they have determinedly made their own. They might have had life. God mercifully and long strove with them, in order that they might be constrained to choose life, and all the influences of His providence and of His Spirit were directed to this end. "But they would not." That is the sole and the full interpretation of their doom.

There is an eternal justice in harmony with the

<sup>1</sup> With great deference, I would suggest to the wise and good men who recoil from the thought that sin is to some extent (to what extent we know not) irremediable even by God, that there is an earlier and darker mystery still, namely, that the entrance of sin was inpreventible. I for one could never believe that the holy God might have prevented its entrance, but did not. But if it was inpreventible, it is not hard to conclude that in some of its forms it may also be irremediable even by infinite love.

highest will, though not dependent upon it. The law of the universe is truly God's law, but, like Himself, the law is eternal and immutable. Wherever sin is, and so long as it continues, punishment is inevitable. Nothing can hinder it. When divine mercy triumphs, as in myriads of instances it has done and shall do, it is never by trenching on justice, but only and always by destroying sin. With profound reverence let it be uttered, that even God exercises no power of punishing or not, according to His pleasure, and in what degree it seems good to Him. Save with a limitation, presently to be stated, the God of purity and love has no part in the punishment of sin—no part in moral, or even in physical, evil. Both are simply His foes and the foes of creation. To moral evil,<sup>1</sup> in its origin, its nature, its course, and all its aspects, His sole relation is that of irreconcilable resistance and hatred. Even physical evil can be only abhorrent to His nature. Essentially considered and in one form or other, physical evil is the inevitable effect of moral evil. God has nothing to do with the production of this effect, but He reigns supremely, and has chosen to reign, over all its distributions, its times, and its modes. Mercifully He reigns over these, and directs and shapes that suffering, which, inde-

<sup>1</sup> See "Evil and God," &c., pp. 180-230.

pendently of Him, was in one form or other inevitable, so as to act powerfully on the moral nature of men, and to retrieve, as far as that is possible, the deeper curse in which all physical evil originates. But eternal justice, meaning the inevitable punishment of sin, takes its course resistlessly. God, for merciful and holy ends, determines the special physical mode in which the penalty shall come forth here on earth. But its real, inner, necessary infliction is inpreventible. It must come down. It lies in the essential nature of things that it must come down. Ever and ever, justice inflicts an inevitable penalty, and exacts the completest satisfaction.

But without seeking to qualify these statements in the least degree, it must not be overlooked for a moment that justice, in the awful sense explained, is not the only fact in the universe, and not the divinest, by any means. There may be nothing more indispensable in its place than justice, but there are very many things which are morally far higher and nobler. Even the simple, familiar terms, "right" and "righteous," convey to the spiritual sense a grander idea than is conveyed by the word "just." The just is always right, but the right may be far more than is simply just. It is just to give the exact reward which was contracted for, but it might

be perfectly right and righteous, and the very opposite of unjust, to give much more. It is just to demand full compensation for wrong done, but there are cases where it might be perfectly right and very noble to be satisfied with less; noblest of all, freely to forgive the wrong, without any compensation. Less reward and more punishment than is deserved would be injustice; more reward and less punishment would not be justice, but it might be perfectly righteous, and most wise and nobly generous. The Great God is always right and righteous in His dealings with His creatures, but we have found that He is not just—that is, not merely just. Unjust He cannot be, but He is always more and better than just, because He is merciful.

Much stress has been laid<sup>1</sup> on what is called the essentially ethical nature of man and of man's

<sup>1</sup> "The Atonement: a Satisfaction for the Ethical Nature both of God and Man," by Prof. Shedd of Andover. Amer. Bib. Repository, October 1859. The constant employment in this essay of the term "ethical" for "moral"—*e.g.*, ethical nature, ethical claims, ethical feelings, ethical emotions, &c., &c., is unhappy. The commoner term has precisely the same significance, and to English readers has greater directness and simplicity. Except that the one is of Greek and the other of Latin derivation, there is no difference between them. The essay is ingenious, forcible, and lucid. For me, it is enough to say, that the sternest justice is perfectly satisfied in the case of every transgressor, because the ordained penalty is always inflicted on sin. Moreover, this quality so much extolled, justice, however ethical, is not the noblest and not the loftiest principle in the nature of either God or man.

Maker. It is argued, that unless God would stand condemned by His own creatures and by the constitution with which He has endowed them, He must, in His dealings with them, be governed by the rule of exact justice. The present chapter has been a virtual, though not formal, reply to such reasoning. It is not doubted for a moment that there is found in human nature a demand for justice ; we could not live, society could not be held together without it. Its violation, in any case, inflicts a deep injury on the common weal, and the common nature protests against it, and demands reparation. Unquestionably, this is one side of our humanity, but it forms only half of the truth respecting it ; and, taken for the whole truth, it becomes a pestilent falsehood. We demand justice, at the least justice, but wherever it is possible and consistent, the true soul cries out vehemently for more than justice, necessary though it be, and desires with irrepressible intensity the exercise of mercy, pure, undeserved mercy. We wrong ourselves grievously, if we forget that there is not only another, but a far nobler, a diviner side of our nature than justice, and that man bows down instinctively, and is formed by his Maker to bow down with loving reverence, not to what is merely just, but to what is generous and forgiving, and disinterested, and self-sacrificing. Mere justice

and no more, rectilineal justice, is neither an exalted nor an exalting quality in any rational being. Only to do what mere justice demands, when anything less, or anything else, would be wrong, can never command more than complacent approval. We do approve justice, we see it to be good, to be indispensable, we commend it, our nature demands it. But there is here no towering majesty of virtue, no Alpine grandeur of moral stature, no nobility and sublimity of goodness, nothing to kindle enthusiasm, to inspire lofty admiration, to touch and swell the soul with wonder and with love, and to stir its deepest longings after the divine. We do commend and seek justice, it is essential, but it is very far from being the highest even among human virtues. Love of truth, unswerving devotion to principle, the spirit of submission and self-sacrifice, lovingness, disinterested regard for others, above all, mercy to the ill-deserving and to those who have injured us without cause—not a mere impulse, not an inconsiderate and sudden rush of pity, but wise, deliberate, principled mercy—these, far above mere rectilineal justice, are among the God-like excellences of men; these form the best and purest side of our nature; these are the qualities which we are formed to

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admire, almost to worship ; these are the mountain heights of human virtue ; justice is only one of the lower stages, from which we look up to these grandeurs above ; these are the very divinest things belonging to us ; and it is here, accordingly, in this most sacred region of all, that our Maker has divinely appealed to us.

The instinct of justice in human nature is unquestionable ; but the instinct of mercy is deeper, and is never wanting in noble human souls. It is God-like to forgive, to forgive freely. Man never rises so near to the divine, as when out of a pure, free, self-forgetting, irrepressible love, he forgives causeless wrong done to him. No precept of Christ has more indubitably the stamp of heaven upon it than that gem of all gems, which enriches the New Testament, and which can be found nowhere else, " Love ye your enemies." Never did the Saviour of men breathe out upon the world more of the deepest spirit of God, than when on the cross he prayed, " Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." It is divine, it is the divinest of all divine things to forgive. We feel it, we are sure of it, there is no arguing against it, it is an indestructible intuition of reason and conscience. God would not be God to His human creatures, the

object of deepest veneration, and admiration, and love, if He could not and did not forgive, forgive freely and for ever.

But eternal justice abides nevertheless, and wherever sin is, justice brings down its inevitable doom, in terms of the universal law, "Sin is death." This brief, dark sentence might have summed up the entire history of man and of earth. On the ground of mere justice alone, nothing else could have transpired. But there is such an attribute as divine mercy, pure, free, unprompted mercy. From the beginning, and through many agencies and influences, mercy has wondrously interposed, not to defraud justice, but to destroy sin—to destroy sin, which is death, and to create holiness, which is life. At last, by one amazing intervention, God's uttermost was put forth to secure the double effect. By love, whose breadth and length, and depth and height, no mind can compass, sin in the soul is slain, and the indestructible life-germ of holiness is implanted. Justice receives all its own, for with the death of sin its claim is at end, while pure mercy takes forth the ransomed, to beautify and bless them for ever, in the world of light, and life, and love.



## CHAPTER V.

### ATONEMENT AND SATISFACTION.

SECTION FIRST.—IMAGINED NECESSITY OF SATISFACTION.

SECTION SECOND.—SATISFACTION FOR SIN IMPOSSIBLE.



## SECTION FIRST.

Imagined Necessity of Satisfaction—1. Law—But Penalty inflicted  
—2. Justice—Never Defrauded—No Unsettled Claims—3.  
Moral Government—Not Dishonoured or Overthrown—Its  
Security, Divine Self-sacrifice.

THE relation of human sin to spiritual law and to eternal justice is the great question which has long divided and still divides honest, able, and pious men. Calm reflection on the dark mystery of moral evil, its origin, its aspect towards the Great Being, its action on the spirit of man, and its effects in the universe, ought at least to restrain us from irreverent dogmatism, whether on the one side or the other. It is not likely that any solution, be it what it may, shall contain all the truth and nothing but the truth. On such a subject, it is much more probable, that the varying tendencies and conditions of different minds shall sway them, both by strong prepossessions and by as strong prejudices, and that it shall be far easier to point out, in conflicting interpretations, what is distinctly wrong, than to

furnish what shall commend itself as a true and final solution.

These two words, "atonement" and "satisfaction," are believed to express the method whereby the forgiveness of human sin can be reconciled with the rectitude of the universe, and with the authority of the supreme Lawgiver. And it is conceded most readily, that very profound conceptions of the awful nature of moral evil, of the infinite purity of God, and of the necessity of holiness, have had not a little to do with the origination and with the continued prevalence of this belief; and the moral value of such conceptions can scarcely be exaggerated, however we may be obliged to refuse the issue to which they conduct.

Without entering far at present, as we shall be compelled to do hereafter, on verbal criticism, one or two brief statements of a verbal kind seem needful in this place. The English word "atonement" is of frequent occurrence in the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures; but its use in them can be investigated with greater advantage when we come to examine the doctrine of sacrifice in the economy of Moses, with which that of atonement is essentially connected. In the New Testament, the word is only once met with, "By whom we have received *the atonement*."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 11.

With perfect justice it might have been rendered "reconciliation," and with greater propriety, because elsewhere throughout the New Testament, the translation is "reconcile," not "atone." Three Greek words, having the same root, are used by the New Testament writers, *Διαλλάσσω*, *Καταλλάσσω*, and *Ἀποκαταλλάσσω*. If there be a difference in their meaning it amounts simply to this: *καταλλάσσω*, is, "I reconcile;" *διαλλάσσω*, conveys that the reconciliation is mutual; and, *ἀποκαταλλάσσω*, is an intensive and emphatic form of the simpler word. But none of the three can admit, by any possibility, the scholastic idea of atonement,—that is, expiation. In eleven passages of the New Testament, besides that quoted above, one or other of these verbs, or a derivative noun or adjective, is found, and is always translated "reconcile" or "reconciliation." "First be *reconciled* to thy brother;"<sup>1</sup> "Much more, being *reconciled*;"<sup>2</sup> "If the casting away of them be the *reconciling* of the world;"<sup>3</sup> God hath *reconciled* us to himself, . . . and hath given to us the ministry of *reconciliation*;"<sup>4</sup> "God was in Christ, *reconciling* the world unto himself, . . . committed unto us the word of *reconciliation*;"<sup>5</sup> "Might *reconcile* both (Jews and Gentiles) in one body by the cross;"<sup>6</sup> The wife . . . "be

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xi. 15.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v. 18.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. ii. 16.

*reconciled* to her husband ;”<sup>1</sup> “By him to *reconcile* all things (in earth and heaven) unto himself ;”<sup>2</sup> “Yet now both he *reconciled*.”<sup>3</sup>

In one other passage of the New Testament, the English noun “reconciliation” occurs, “To make *reconciliation* for the sins of the people.”<sup>4</sup> But the original is not one or other of the three words above-named, but, εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι ; and it is not a little remarkable that, with only seven exceptions, out of about sixty or seventy passages in the Old Testament, where the Hebrew original is translated by atone or atonement, the Septuagint employs some part or derivative of this verb, ἱλάσκειν, or of its compound, ἐξιλάσκειν. It is perhaps more noticeable still, that in the only passages of the Old Testament, eight in number, where our translation introduces the word “reconcile,” the Septuagint has invariably, ἱλάσκειν, or its compound. There may be more in this than meets the casual eye. Perhaps we shall find by and by a closer approximation in meaning, between the word “reconcile” and the word “atone,” in its true sense.

Satisfaction—satisfaction for sin, satisfaction to law or to justice, satisfaction to God on account of sin—is purely a term of artificial theology. It does not occur at all, either in the Old or in the New Testament, in this or in any kindred sense.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 11.<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 20.<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 21.<sup>4</sup> Heb. ii. 17.

To satisfy, we understand, is to content a person aggrieved. In relation to God, as Dr Watts,<sup>1</sup> in his temperate, gentle way, says, it is to do something which shall recompense Him for the affront which has been put on His authority—others add, for the injury caused by resistance and rebellion—something which shall content and appease the offended majesty of Heaven. “To atone” and “to satisfy,” in artificial theology, are virtually the same, with only this difference, that while “to atone” means to make reparation or amends for wrong done, “to satisfy” conveys the additional idea that the reparation or amends have been sufficient, and have contented the injured party. The presupposition lies underneath both alike, that something in the way of acknowledgment to God, or expiation, or compensation, something adequate and satisfactory, must be done before human sin can be pardoned.

There are three principal grounds on which this necessity of satisfaction is based, and they shall now be examined in their order, but with great brevity, because the means of setting them aside have substantially and at full length been supplied in the earlier chapters.

I. The law of God, it is alleged, has been dishonoured by disobedience, and its authority, trampled

<sup>1</sup> Works, iii. 742.

under foot of men, has been fatally damaged. The dishonour must be wiped out, and the damaged authority must be reasserted and re-established.

Were the supposed dishonour and damage real, the necessity argued for would be imperative. But are they real? Is authority really weakened simply by being resisted, and when it is perfectly able to overcome and put down the resistance? Is a law really dishonoured by the simple fact of its being violated, when it is perfectly able to avenge itself? Most persons would be ready to think that the entire dishonour, in such a case, would fall, along with the punishment, on the violator, and that the law would stand uninjured and erect. A law, any law, human or divine, is honoured up to the highest limit of possibility, simply when it is maintained in all its force, in spite of all resistance; when its provisions, in themselves wise and right and good, are found to be comprehensive and complete; and when its penal sanctions, perfectly adequate and perfectly just, are carried out invariably, without partiality and without prejudice. It would be real dishonour to law if there were any indirect evasion of its terms, or any supplementing or subsidising of its provisions. It would be real dishonour to law if, for example, a case should arise, clearly within the range which it was intended to embrace, which its fixed provisions were



inadequate to meet, a case therefore which necessitated a new enactment, enforced by a new penalty. This would reveal defect in the original statute, and want of comprehension and foresight in the lawgiver. But is there any such inherent imperfection in the spiritual laws of the universe, or in the divine Lawgiver? As a matter of necessity, spiritual laws contemplated disobedience. Every law does, and must. When then, in the government of God, disobedience occurred, was the law found unequal to the occasion, and were its penalties proved to be insufficient, although the Only Wise and Holy One had ordained them? It has already been shown that the divine penalty, perfectly righteous and perfectly adequate in the judgment of God, is inflicted without exception and without fail. It has already been shown that sin, in the human soul, is moral death; always, everywhere, without exception, it is moral death, that is, eternal death begun. Where is dishonour? On the contrary, the very highest honour possible is herein done to the divine law and to the divine Lawgiver. The idea of acknowledgment, expiation, reparation, compensation from without, would suppose defect within, and would be an affront and a disgrace. Such reparation is not only not needed, but is strictly incongruous and impossible. The ordained penalty having been impartially inflicted, the law is verified

and made honourable by itself—unless, indeed, we can imagine that God has been at fault and has adjudged a punishment which is found insufficient for the offence.

With any subsequent, foreign proceeding, the law has nothing to do, and neither suggests nor ignores such a thing. The rescuing of the transgressor, on whom punishment has descended and in whom it is working out its dread effect, law does not provide for, but as little does it forbid. And it argues no defect and no error, that it recognises and can recognise nothing of this nature, because it lies wholly outside its province. Beyond prohibitions and commands, penalties and their impartial infliction, law has no voice, whether to encourage or to deter. But no possible dishonour is done; on the contrary, a new glory is reflected back upon it, when, without trenching in the least on its sacred province, and in quite another region, over which it has no control, a work of pure mercy is achieved, in harmony with infinite holiness and infinite wisdom. “Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.”

II. Justice demands and must receive satisfaction.

It is argued that were the transgressors of God's law to escape, claims the most righteous would be set aside and justice would be publicly dishonoured. But we have found that the transgressors of God's law never do and never can escape, that no righteous claim is or ever can be set aside, and that justice, instead of being dishonoured, is inflexible and inexorable within its proper sphere. It would be a calamity, the most fatal to the universe of being, that a shadow of doubt should for a moment rest on the perfect rectitude of the Great Ruler. But no such doubt can ever cast its shadow in this sacred direction. And it has been our work in the earlier chapters to make good these confident assertions, which in this place are simply reiterated.

Reference has already been made to Professor Shedd's Essay on the Doctrine of Atonement.<sup>1</sup> As the most recent, perhaps among the most ingenious of the modes of representing this article of faith, it may be of importance to condense its purport, and as nearly as possible in its own words. Moral reason and conscience in man, the Professor argues, form the highest part of the moral image of his Maker. This has the closest affinity with the nature of God, and is a faithful index of what that nature

<sup>1</sup> American Biblical Repository, Oct. 1859.

must be. This is the relic of primitive kindredness with the First Perfect, and furnishes a clue to the character and the procedure of the Most High. Justice is the very substratum of the divine essence, and any method of pardon must first give plenary satisfaction to this attribute. God cannot and must not disturb His own ethical tranquillity, His own eternal sense of righteousness. In this view, the doctrine of expiation contains a metaphysique, and is defensible at the bar of philosophic reason. "God, by and through a judicial inflection of His own providing, and His own enduring in the person of His Son—Himself the Judge, Himself the Priest, Himself the sacrifice—conciliates His own holy justice towards the guilty." "We need primarily to be saved from the judicial displeasure of that immaculate Spirit, in whose character and ethical feeling towards sin the human conscience itself has its eternal ground and authority." The atoning sacrifice of the God-man renders propitious towards the transgressor that particular side of the divine nature, and that one specific emotion of the living God, which otherwise and without it, would be displacent. "God's holy justice is conciliated to guilty man."

These statements, I venture to think and have attempted in the foregoing pages to prove, pro-

ceed on a total misapprehension. It is not merely, that justice in the sense already explained is far from being, as it is here supposed to be, the highest attribute in the ethical nature either of God or of man, but the simple fact is, that be the rank of this divine attribute what it may, we should err egregiously in imagining that its rightful claims ever are, or ever can be, set aside. They cannot be set aside for a moment, and precisely for this reason, they never require and never can admit of a supplementary satisfaction from any quarter whatever. The righteous verdict of Heaven against all moral evil is, in every instance, carried out inexorably. As surely as a soul sins, in that moment it dies morally, that is, it begins to die, and in the degree in which it sins it begins to die. Even where a new divine life has afterwards been enkindled within it, and has proved itself the stronger power, so long as sin remains and to the extent in which it remains, death, moral death, never ceases to mingle its poison with the breath of a higher life. There is no possibility of defrauding and dishonouring eternal justice, no possibility of setting aside its unalterable sentence.

As for any method of putting an end to sin, and thus to the penalty which sin insures, justice has not a word to utter, either against it or for it. But,

since the claim of justice is founded solely on the presence of sin in the soul, if sin were expelled, and, so far as it was expelled, the claim would cease, and the process of perdition would thus far terminate. In redeeming and saving men, the Great God touches not by a hair's-breadth the course of perfect rectitude. It is in quite another region, that of pure grace, without disregarding a single righteous claim—it is through the medium of His Almighty love—that God puts sin in the human soul to death, or rather, that He originates a process which issues at last in the destruction of sin. In the end, mercy triumphs over sin; but justice, all the while, is not undermined, but maintained and glorified. There is no compromise, no ingenious expedient for meeting an unforeseen emergency, and for helping out what had proved to be inadequate. There is no tampering with the letter or the spirit of a precept, for the sake of indirectly gaining a purpose, however benignant; there is no arbitrary substitution of one kind of punishment for another; and no carrying out of a judicial verdict in form, but evading it in fact. All is clear, real, simple, direct, founded in rectitude and truth. Eternal justice, which insures penalty wherever there is sin, offers and can offer no obstruction to the putting away of sin, if that be possible. On the contrary,

it distinctly favours this issue, for its deliverance on the one side, "holiness is life," is as sacred and as sure as its deliverance on the other side, "sin is death." Almighty mercy wings its course towards a result, all-worthy of God, without a murmur, from the sternest justice, or from the holiest statutes of Heaven.

III. The moral government of the universe would be endangered, if sin were simply pardoned, in the absence of an atonement—an adequate atonement—such as was made by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It is argued, with great truth and force, that if, in pardoning human sin, God acted on the mere impulse of mercy, this would have the effect of a cruel temptation, placed before all intelligent creatures—a temptation to sin—since they might sin with such safety. They might then reason, with perfect accuracy, that evil could not be the atrocious thing which it is declared to be, and that God's infinite abhorrence of it must be a fiction. A mere impulse, however nobly generous, is not a safe ground, not honourable, and not consistent, on which to place the remission of sin and of merited punishment.

It is admitted, unqualifiedly, that it would be fatal to imagine human sin pardoned, in the weakness and fervour of a mere emotion. All must consent that such a thing is impossible to the Supreme

Mind. And hence we have already proved that, in the divine redemption, sin is not forgiven merely, but is literally, though gradually, killed in the soul. It would be strictly true to say that it is always first struck at, in order that it may be thoroughly destroyed, and that only in so far as it is killed and cast out of the nature is it ever really done with and passed by. God's only dealing with sin, His first and His entire action upon it to the last, evinces nothing but eternal and unutterable abhorrence. Instead of mere, soft obliviousness, as if it were a thing unimportant and easily overlooked, God begins by aiming a deadly blow at the heart in which it lies, or rather, at that in the heart which He hates, and will not, cannot endure. And the means whereby this blow is aimed, and the weapon which the Almighty hand wields, are fitted and intended to produce unmingled awe throughout the universe.

The stupendous mystery of Incarnation looms solemnly on the farthest verge of the horizon of human thought. It is verily a symbol of love, but the love is so unfathomable that we tremble to gaze down into it. And love is associated with a wisdom so unsearchable and so vast, and with a holiness so transcendent and so pure, that the conception, when it is even distantly approached, is overwhelming. Did the Great Being who filleth



eternity and immensity veil Himself in the form of man? Astonishment deepens as we ask, Did He so pity His earthly children, that to make them hate the evil which was separating them from Him, He came down among them as one of themselves? And did The Incarnate live on this earth, only to be despised and rejected? Had he to bear the contradiction and scorn of the world, and to suffer on a cross? It was so, in very truth. Talk of public justice and of the administration of the universe! Talk of salutary terror and of the atrocity of moral evil! Is it possible to conceive of any method, any punishment of actual transgressors, so omnipotent in its moral influence, as this blended revelation of love and power, of holiness and wisdom? Never was God in such earnest to guard the foundations of His moral government, to awaken in His creatures the profoundest sentiments of fear on the one hand and of love on the other, to exhibit the enormity of moral evil, and to prove His irreconcilable repugnance to it. Never was God in such earnest, to speak intelligibly and impressively, to the whole rational creation, to reach down to the deepest spring of created intelligence and emotion, to touch humanity at its innermost centre, to draw back His erring creatures irresistibly from evil, and to

attach them by a loving allegiance to His government and His throne.

God's self-sacrifice in Christ, God's self-sacrifice for human transgression ! That is the holy region, around which the Great Being seeks to gather His lost children ; that is the honourable, the consistent, the safe ground, on which He forgives, by destroying human sin. And it is thus, that our Lord Christ not only has made, but really is, a true atonement—not in the sense of scholastic theology, the sense of offering expiation, compensation, reparation to God for sin, but in the New Testament meaning of the word, reconciliation. Christ has both effected the reconciliation of men to God, and he is himself the point and the source of reconciliation. That English word "atone" may have one or other of two distinct derivations, but it must have the one or the other. It may be to at-one, to bring to one, to reconcile two conflicting parties. Or it may be to a-tone, to bring to one tone, to attune, to harmonise. In either case it is clear that, etymologically, the English "atone" is precisely equivalent to reconcile ; and this naturally enough accounts for the fact already noticed, that the translators of the New Testament have rendered the same Greek term, in one instance "atone," and in the other instances "reconcile."

## SECTION SECOND.

Satisfaction for Sin not Possible—1. The Fact of Sin; 2. Its Criminality; 3. Its Power for Evil Unchangeable—Sin Destroyed and Forgiven—Divine Anger—How Inappeasable—Anger and Love in Cross—Destruction of Sin in Soul—This, Salvation.

IF, as has been shown, spiritual laws need no satisfaction, and are perfectly satisfied; if eternal justice needs no satisfaction, and is perfectly satisfied; if the moral government of God needs no satisfaction; if it has not been damaged, and is not capable of being damaged; if the bare suspicion of such a thing be most dishonouring to the Great Ruler,—we may venture to ask, how can any atonement, in the scholastic sense, act upon human sin, or be related to it in any way? How can it touch human sin at all? There are at least three points at which contact or influence is impossible.

1. The fact of sin is immovable. That it has been perpetrated, abides true for ever. Be its time, or its place, or its kind, or its amount, what

they may, it can never be blotted out. True once, it is true always. The fact must remain as sure as at the first moment. At any point in the future, it shall be true, that thousands or myriads of ages before, in such and such circumstances, I perpetrated a wicked deed, or formed a wicked purpose, that conscious evil was in my soul, and that my will resisted the will of God and chose what I knew to be wrong. That fact is immortal as my being. No atonement can ever alter it. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can touch it in the slightest conceivable degree.

2. The criminality of sin is unalterable; whatever enormity belonged to it at the moment of its commission, belongs to it for ever. A thousand substitutes, bearing a thousand punishments, each a thousand times heavier than was at the first merited, could not remove one iota from the criminality of the original transgression. A certain character and degree of wickedness attached to it at the time; it attaches to it through all eternity. When myriads of ages have passed away, it shall remain as true as ever, that such and such, and no other, was the exact amount of moral turpitude in the offence.

3. The power for evil, which inheres in sin, never dies, except with itself. Sin is essentially

self-perpetuative and self-propagative. Evil in a soul goes forth, like a diseased breath, into another soul, acts on it insidiously, and begets new sin in it. The second breathes infection into a third, and the third into a fourth. In ever-increasing ratio, the numbers multiply and the evil spreads indefinitely — eternally. No atonement, (in the scholastic sense,) no expiation of sin, can touch, in the slightest degree, this polluting, corrupting energy, which lies in the essential nature of moral evil. Wherever sin exists, even God could not separate this energy from it. Sin and power for evil are connected unalterably, as cause and effect. The effect must follow, if the cause be present. But the cause itself may perish, and herein lies the only hope of sinful humanity. So long as sin lives in the soul, the poisonous exhalation, the corrupting energy, must go forth from it. But sin may die—may be wounded and finally killed, and cast forth, and then its power for evil necessarily dies with it. The fact that it was perpetrated is immortal, the exact amount of criminality which inhered in it can never be lessened, but the principle, the root out of which it grew and in which it lives, the sin itself, may be wounded to death. And so, in like manner, may the sin which it begat in another soul, and the sin which that again

begat, and all the sins which issued from one dark centre: they may all be made to perish and die. The germ of evil in the heart may be struck at, a blow divinely aimed shall be effective, and sin, pierced through by redeeming love, shall begin to die, and all its fatal power shall die with it. Instead of love of evil, there shall be an ever-deepening love of good and of truth; instead of separation, there shall be nearness of heart to God in Christ; and instead of chosen rebelliousness and resistance, there shall be a new, and reverent, and loving kindredness with Heaven, and, through all, a new power within, for good, not evil, shall be created.

Nothing can be done with sin, with conscious, voluntary evil in the heart, except killing it outright. The process may be gradual, but it must be mortal from the first. What sin has been, it has been; what it has done, it has done,—that is the last that can be said. No expiation, or compensation, or reparation, or amends, can touch these standing facts. There they are, for ever and ever unalterable. The only thing possible, the only thing which can in the least avail, is to strike the root itself, out of which evil springs; to strike a mortal blow, the sure, though gradual, effect of which shall be the destruction and extirpation of sin. And this is what God does. Sin in the soul can be killed; it has been killed; the re-

deeming, reconciling God in Christ Jesus is killing the sin of the world. This is His noblest work among men,—killing sin and enkindling love, a godly, manly, holy love, the seed-spark of eternal life.

But if sin be really inexpiable in the sense already explained, what place is left for the atonement of scholastic theology? What can it do? Whom can it affect? Shall we suppose—and this is the last and the only other thing that can be supposed—that there is something in the mind of God, some irritation and provocation which needs to be soothed and quieted, some sense of injury, some feeling of wounded and offended dignity which demands satisfaction? This is, in literal truth, supposed, and sanctions itself by the language of the Scriptures.

In the New Testament, we meet, though seldom, with such expressions as these: “The wrath to come,” “The day of wrath,” “Being saved from wrath,” “The cup of the wrath of God.” In the Old Testament, this kind of phraseology is more frequent, much stronger, and more vehement: “The fierce anger of the Lord,” “The fierceness of His wrath,” “The fire,” even “the fury of His anger.” Such language, applicable to one aspect of the divine nature, does not stand alone, but is only in keeping with the whole of the representations given in the Old Testament of the person, the attributes, and the doings of

the Most High. They are often intensely figurative, do not admit of a literal rendering, but demand a spiritual and very modified interpretation. "The eyes of the Lord," "the hand," "the arm," "the feet," "the face," "the mouth of the Lord," are familiar to readers of the Bible, create no difficulty, and are intelligible and impressive, although literally they must be altogether untrue. And farther, we have to bear in mind, that not only anger and wrath and fury, but other even distinctly weak and bad passions are ascribed to God,—such, for example, as revenge and jealousy and remorse, at least, repentant regret and cruel irony and mockery. "It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."<sup>1</sup> We can have no difficulty in understanding from such a passage, the reality and the strength of divine sympathy in human affairs. It is clear that the Jehovah of the Bible, even in its earliest revelations, is no "Jupiter Maximus," adamant and impassive. The fate of the world touches the divine heart, and awakens in it the most tender and profound emotions, affects it to such a degree, that, had it been a human being who was so moved, he must have given way to regret, remorse, and grief. Such affections in God are impossible, but we are taught that divine pity is as real and as deep,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 6.



as if God were capable of repentance and of grief. A second and stronger passage will be found in Prov. i. 24: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." The truth conveyed, through this appalling medium, we can scarcely fail to perceive; it is the utter hopelessness of those who have often and long, but in vain, been reproved and warned and complained of and remonstrated with. Their doom is as inevitable as if God really rejoiced in what was so richly deserved, as if He could even make it subject of bitter mockery and scorn. There is not a passage in the whole Bible where the literal sense is so tremendously blasphemous. The very tone is fearful, but the underlying idea is obvious, and the impression conveyed by the words, rightly interpreted, is only wholesome and just.

We are surely justified in adopting a similar method of interpretation, in the case of all those passages, whether in the Old or in the New Testament, which in various forms ascribe fierce wrath and fury to the Almighty. The literal sense cannot be entertained for a moment, and so far as I am aware, no school of theologians or inter-

preters worthy of consideration holds it possible to accept it. But in rejecting the literal sense, we only act in accordance with those general principles which govern all languages, and especially with the known laws of Eastern writing. When God is represented as wounded by the sins of men, goaded by the desire of retaliation, provoked to vehement indignation, and inflamed with burning wrath, and with an ungovernable fury of resentment, the fundamental idea, the one only idea, must be divine abhorrence of sin. It is as if sin were a personal assault and affront to God; it is as if, in His deep abhorrence and His unslumbering vigilance, God made it His own proper work to detect and to punish sin; it is as if He came into direct and direful collision with transgressors, and as if all the greater and the lesser evils which come forth in the evolution of the vast system of providence were inflicted, and inflicted with supreme satisfaction, immediately and directly, by His hand. Nor may it be overlooked, that the visitations which come down on wicked men are often such as, if inflicted by a human being, would evince fierce anger and implacable revenge. But there is no revenge in God. No sane man could endure the thought for a moment. There is, there can be no perturbation in the Supreme nature, no violence, nothing to which

the name of passion could be given. It is impossible. The idea is fearfully dishonouring to God; is wholly and only impious. But it abides solemnly true, nevertheless, that there is anger, literally and really anger, in God against sin. Let us, with great reverence and carefulness, try to discriminate what precisely this statement involves.

That human emotion, to which we give the name "anger," contains two, and only two elements; a strong feeling of displeasure at wrong done, and a desire as strong to put down the wrong. This affection, with perfect truth, is attributed to the Great Being, but with a necessary and obvious difference—namely, that the desire leading to effort to put down sin is rendered needless by the ordained course of the universe, for spiritual law itself necessitates the instant punishment of sin. Anger, therefore, in the divine mind is simply and only deep, settled displeasure—no more; without perturbation or passion, without resentment or revenge. God's anger against sin is a profound, calm, pure feeling of unmingled abhorrence, the intensity and the unalterableness of which it is not possible to exaggerate. It is this and no more. The Holy One alone *comprehends* sin, its entire moral turpitude, the enmity, the defiance to Himself, the disregard of law, and the despite to conscience and

reason in which it originates and which it involves. The Holy One alone comprehends the entire course of sin, through time, into the eternal ages, the subtle process whereby all good is gradually effaced, and passion and evil desire and utter self-will become rampant and tyrannic, the thick darkness in which the spirit may be wrapped, and the unmitigated vileness which is possible to it, and how that nature which He formed to be like Himself, may be damned in misery and infamy. The Holy One alone comprehends how sin, once introduced, spreads like a plague, and creates disorder and rebellion throughout the universe, and becomes a fountain of pollution and of darkness—of crime and of suffering.

Sin is the only thing within the limits of immensity which God hates, infinitely, eternally hates, hates because of its own hideous and foul nature, hates because it is the degradation, the curse and the ruin of the souls He hath made and loves. But let it be well and deeply pondered, that this holy divine anger can admit of no atonement. God's displeasure against sin can never be appeased, never changed in the slightest degree. Instead of any possible atonement, sin, in this regard, is necessarily and for ever inexpiable. Divine antipathy to sin is not a judicial, official emotion, but a genuine,

profound, unalterable abhorrence, springing out of the essential nature of God, and out of the essential nature of moral evil. Were moral evil utterly put away, extirpated and expelled, were the sin which lies in the soul put to death, the only cause of divine anger would be removed; but so long as sin remains, in any amount or degree, nothing can alter the feeling in relation to it, with which the divine mind is possessed. Ten thousand sacrifices, each priceless in itself, could not change or modify in the least, God's infinite hatred of sin. In this regard, the Holy One can never be placated, never pacified, never conciliated; that is to say, sin, exist where it may, there, where it exists, can never be anything but God's eternal abhorrence. Nothing can ever in the slightest degree touch the fact, that sin is exactly as God sees it to be, and that God sees it to be exactly what it is and where it is. By no device can it ever be made to appear to Him other than it is, or elsewhere than it is. Sin existing, by no device can God's relation or sentiment towards it be changed, one iota, for one moment. The divine thought of sin, the divine feeling, and precisely on the same grounds, the divine judgment concerning sin are unchangeable. For ever and ever, God declares of sin wherever it exists, and so far as it exists, "it is the abominable thing

which I hate." For ever and ever God ordains without exception and without fail, "the soul that sinneth shall die." This is the simple announcement of an eternal fact.

We have touched one of the deep roots of human redemption. It is because God hates sin, that He has determined it shall be and must be put down. But this is only one side of the divine nature. Love of man, is as profound in it, as hatred of sin, and has as much to do or more, with the purpose of salvation. The life and the death of the Incarnate, Nazareth and Jerusalem, Calvary and the cross, were the token of God's abhorrence of sin, but they were yet more significantly the symbol of love to man. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, consistent and legitimate, which God was not willing to do in order to destroy sin, but it was, if possible, still more true and more impressively evinced to be true, that there was nothing, absolutely nothing, which God was not willing to do in order to save man. The Father of souls, in spite of all the provocation of human sin, was not transformed into a mere judge, still less into a merciless avenger. Instead of erecting His throne the higher, and clothing Himself with terrors, in order to crush a pitiful rebellion, He humbled Himself to a depth unfathomable, entered

into a new and closer relationship with His sinful creatures, and came into His own world as a sorrowing, suffering, and loving man. Instead of needing to be propitiated, and appeased, and pacified, and conciliated, before He could deal with men, we behold God acting in pure, unsought, and unbought grace. "God so loved the world,"—of Himself, first of all,—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.” Instead of being first moved, or prevailed upon, or somehow enabled to love the world, by the Incarnation and the death of Christ, the New Testament teaches us that it was His pure love which originated that Incarnation and that death. But it was not love alone. Divine love of man was combined with divine abhorrence of sin. God was resolved on saving man, but He must also put an end to sin. Only through the destruction of sin could salvation be achieved, and the double end was gained by one stupendous means. Sin is killed by love, it could be killed by nothing else. Man is saved by love, he could be saved by nothing else. The destruction of sin *is* the salvation of man; the two are one, with only a difference in the mode of statement. It was proclaimed from heaven in a way more subduing than by words, that our Father pitied and loved us, though He

abhorred our sins, that He had no pleasure in the death of His children, but entreated them to come back to His feet and His heart. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die." Men would not seek after God, but lo ! God sought after men. Very God humbled Himself inconceivably, put Himself before the world, His purity, His rectitude, His wisdom, His love. Very God pleaded in words of tenderness and pity for a place in man's heart, expressed His boundless compassion in human tears, and blood, and death ; did anything, everything, if only men might be reconciled to Him. And they were and they are. The cross, symbol of dishonour and weakness, is the mightiest power in the universe. The hardened, careless, godless heart is touched and won by this ! The corrupt nature feels the rush of a holy, divine force, issuing from this, and the rebellious spirit, the deep proud self-will spurning the will of God, is conquered and broken by this ! Through all, the Redeeming One finds a satisfaction, worthy of His nature, a pure divine contentment, not in sacrificial blood and smoking altars and expiring victims, but in endless good created, in human spirits saved and made pure, and blessed for ever. There is one solitary passage of Scripture, in which the peculiar term of scholastic theology, "satisfaction,"



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is in any manner connected with the redemption of man, and that passage shows beyond all doubt, that its meaning is not only not the same, but the very opposite of that, which long usage has unhappily sanctioned, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be *satisfied*,"—supremely contented with its glorious results.



## CHAPTER VI.

### JUSTIFICATION AND IMPUTATION.

SECTION FIRST.—MEANING OF TERMS.

SECTION SECOND.—TRUTHS ANSWERING TO THE TERMS.



## SECTION FIRST.

Meaning of Terms—Science of Theology and other Sciences—Essentially Different Ground—Theological Terms—Settled by Scripture—Words, Justify, &c.—Literal Sense—Righten, Set Right—Examples—Non-Natural Sense—Spirit of Man, Wrong—Needs to be Set Right—Proof Passages—Justification—Only Thrice, Used.

SYSTEMATIC theology, to which alone the defined terms, justification and imputation, belong, has been attended with some evils which largely counterbalance any amount of good it has ever effected, or is ever likely to effect. Spiritual truth, bearing as it does chiefly on the conscience and the moral nature of man, is among the last things, on which the terms and the laws of formal logic can be tried with safety. Even the idea of constructing a system or science of spiritual truth is very questionable. A science is not simply a body of ascertained knowledge, it is knowledge arranged, accurately classified, and above all, interpreted by its underlying laws. Astronomy, physiology, chemistry, botany, each professes to include

all the known phenomena which belong to its sphere, to distribute these into their proper classes, and to educe the fundamental laws, which account for, and interpret them. No one of the sciences is absolutely complete. In each, new facts, and new orders of facts, and new governing laws, await discovery, in the progress of time. But each, at the present stage of observation, is exhaustive, and leaves behind, in its course, no hopeless exceptions, still less contradictions; and having advanced step by step with entire success, up to the present limit of discovery, it undertakes, by patient research, to explain whatever shall yet arise, within the sphere which it has assumed.

The sphere of theology from its very nature is incapable of being exhaustively explored, and hence every theological system leaves, perhaps at its very centre, many unfilled blanks and gaps, and is forced to acknowledge phenomena which baffle all human methods of interpretation, which are, in fact, to human thought, irreconcilable, although not really contradictory. The rivalry among the systems has ever been only this, which should show the largest area of established truth, with the fewest unexplained difficulties and contradictions. Theology starts from primitive truths, which are not the result of scientific observation, and are not capable,

except in a limited degree, of scientific treatment, truths which are strictly transcendental, having their ground in pure intuition, or in revelation, or in both. And these truths, instead of occupying a region apart by themselves, touch at a thousand vital points, the whole range of spiritual thought, and are interfused and blended with every question within that range. It is quite certain that there must be a real, underlying harmony of spiritual truth, as there undoubtedly is of scientific truth, but the ground of this harmony in the spiritual region has never yet been discovered. Something like a philosophy of theology, an approximative and tentative philosophy may be possible, and we may be able to lay hold of some leading principles which point in the direction of the ultimate harmony, and in which we can rest with entire confidence. But a science or system of theology must be for ever impossible in this twilight of our being; certainly all the efforts to construct such a science, heretofore, have proved on many sides discouraging and disastrous.

There is another important distinction. The exact sciences have each a terminology of its own. They could not be constructed, and could not serve the ends of their construction, in the absence of this indispensable auxiliary. Technical terms in science

answer the purpose of the ordinal numbers in arithmetic, or of the arbitrary signs in algebraic notation. The arithmetician and the algebraist affix a precise value to each figure or sign, and are able to conduct their calculations with perfect accuracy and facility. In like manner, and with equal authority, the man of science defines, for his own purposes, the terms he employs, and arranges under each the facts, or the classes of facts, which properly belong to it. And this is not simply a convenience, it is a necessity, for holding securely what he has gained, and for all valid progress in his department of the great field of inquiry. He has a right to define his terms. The less arbitrary they are, and the more naturally they suggest their meaning, the better; but he has a right to define his terms, to fix the precise sense in which he employs them, and to determine the exact area which they are to cover. Each term shall stand for a certain range of facts, and shall include them all, without exception, but no others. As new facts come to light, either they can be ranged under one or other of the existing terms, or a new term is found which shall denote them and all of their order. It is easy to see that, quite legitimately, the scientific sense of a word shall be perfectly different from its popular general sense, and on the same ground that the meaning of a word in one science shall be per-



fectly different from its meaning in another science. All this is understood and admitted, as a necessity and a manifest benefit.

It is imagined that theology ought not to be denied an amount of licence, which in the case of science is found to be not only harmless, but useful, and even indispensable. Theology must need its technical terms as much as science, and on what ground, it is asked, can it be judged less entitled to create and employ them! But this question overlooks a very essential fact which distinguishes theology, and separates it *toto cælo* from every human science. Theologians are expressly saved the necessity, and peremptorily prohibited the power or the right, of creating terms, or of affixing to any term a technical, special meaning of their own. An authority higher than theirs, a divine authority, as they fully admit, has beforehand put forth in human language,—in language meant to be clear to the ordinary apprehension of common men,—every leading idea within the sphere of theology. What sense of a particular word, or form of words, shall best fit in with a certain system, or shall best stand the tear and wear of logical controversy, is not the question at all, although too manifestly this has often been uppermost with conflicting schools and creeds. But the real and sole question in every instance is simply

this, What is the natural proper meaning of such word or form of words, as employed in the Holy Scriptures? The point which we have to discuss in the present chapter is one which belongs wholly to biblical interpretation. In regard to the terms, "justify" and "justification," as with reference to any other of the technical words which have been adopted by artificial theology, we have simply to ask, what saith the Scripture? Theologians not only have no right to impose a meaning of their own, but they are guilty of a grave offence if they attempt either to extend or to contract the natural sense. Acting on this conviction, we shall quote all the passages, without exception, of the Old and New Testaments, in which the words "justify" or "justification" occur, and in which (it is important to bear in mind) these English terms are employed to translate some part or derivative of the Hebrew *Tsādāq*, or some part or derivative of the Greek *Δικαίω*.

The word used by our translators, "justify," has a very unambiguous sense. According to ordinary, or rather universal, usage, it means to vindicate, to clear, to right, or righten, or set right a person or a transaction; to vindicate, and nothing else, with only such modifications as are readily and naturally in-

cluded in this term.<sup>1</sup> You justify or vindicate an action when you set it right, when you show that its grounds were good, when you put it in its true light, clear of the wrong interpretations which had been given of it. You justify or vindicate an accused person, a man who is charged with wrong done, or with duty neglected, when you show that he is blamed falsely, when you right or righten him, when you set him right with his fellow-men and before the law of his country. There is nothing hereby reached as to his general character, nothing, save in the particular instance. He may be thoroughly wrong in other respects, but, in this one respect, you are able to right him, to justify, vindicate, clear him. For the man who has been really wrong, who has acted wrongfully by his neighbour, and harboured wrong feelings against him, there can be no vindication, except in an entire change of mind and of conduct. You justify him, only when you set him really right, when you induce him to abandon and condemn the wrong, and to choose and cleave to the right.

<sup>1</sup> I have no right to identify the author of the valuable treatise on Christian Faith with any of the conclusions in this volume. But in a point of criticism, and in the mode of interpreting the words, justify, &c., a mode by which, for many years past, I had been helped in understanding the New Testament, it was to me a singular gratification to be confirmed by so well known and sound a scholar. —See "Christian Faith," by Prof. Godwin, p. 156. London: 1862.

It deserves to be specially remarked, that the disputed term is employed by our divine Lord only four times, but not once in the scholastic sense. The apostle James thrice introduces it, but only in its ordinary meaning. The apostle Paul makes frequent use of this word, and it is on his use of it, that theologians found the peculiar sense which they have attached to it.

In the following passages of the Old and New Testaments, the common English sense of the verb, to justify, either must be adopted, or may most naturally, and without any difficulty or straining, be shown to give the true meaning, viz. :—

“The innocent and the righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked,”<sup>1</sup>—that is, vindicate, clear, right them.

“The judges shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked,”<sup>2</sup>—that is, vindicate, clear, right them.

“Condemning the wicked, and justifying the righteous,”<sup>3</sup>—vindicating, clearing, showing him to be right, righting him.

“Mine own mouth would condemn me, if I justify myself,”<sup>4</sup>—that is, vindicate, clear, hold myself to be right when I am not.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxiii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings viii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Job ix. 20.

“Should a man full of talk be justified?”<sup>1</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, held to be right, righted.

“I know that I shall be justified,”<sup>2</sup>—vindicated, cleared, righted at last.

“How then can man be justified with God, or be clean?”<sup>3</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared of blame, held to be right, righted.

“God forbid that I should justify you,”<sup>4</sup>—that is, vindicate, clear, right you, when you are wrong.

“Because he justified himself rather than God,”<sup>5</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, held himself to be right, rather than God.

“Speak, for I desire to justify thee,”<sup>6</sup>—that is, vindicate, clear, right thee, if thou art really right.

“In thy sight shall no man living be justified,”<sup>7</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared of blame, held to be right, righted.

“He that justifieth the wicked . . . (is) an abomination to the Lord,”<sup>8</sup>—that is, vindicates, clears, rights them when they are wrong.

“Who justify the wicked for reward,”<sup>9</sup>—that is, vindicate, clear, make them out to be right, though they know them to be wrong.

<sup>1</sup> Job xi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Job xiii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Job xxv. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Job xxvii. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Job xxxii. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Job xxxiii. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Ps. cxliii. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Prov. xvii. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Isa. v. 23.

“Bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified,”<sup>1</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, righted.

“Declare thou that thou mayest be justified,”<sup>2</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, righted, have justice done thee.

“In (or by) the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory,”<sup>3</sup>—that is, justified in putting their trust in Him, vindicated, righted, seen to be right, and to have real cause for glorying.

“He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me?”<sup>4</sup>—that is, righteth me, and will see justice done.

“By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities,”<sup>5</sup>—that is, vindicate, clear, right them, and set them right.

“Backsliding Israel hath justified herself,”<sup>6</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, made herself out right, when she was wrong.

“Thou hast justified thy sisters, by all thine abominations,”<sup>7</sup>—that is, vindicated them in all their abominations, by thine, as if they were right.

“Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed,”<sup>8</sup> (Hebrew, justified,)—that is, purged from the wrong done it, be righted and made clean.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xliii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xliii. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xlv. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. l. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. liii. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Jer. iii. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Ezek. xvi. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Dan. viii. 14.

These are the whole of the passages of the Old Testament, in which the word "justify" occurs. They are not selected, but taken exactly as they lie in the sacred books. With the exception of not more than one solitary instance, their natural, obvious signification does not admit of a question. The following passages are selected from the New Testament, and they are selected from others which shall be produced in due time, because in them the common meaning of the word "to justify" is the most apposite, as it is the most natural.

"Wisdom is justified in her children,"<sup>1</sup>—that is, vindicated, seen to be what she is, righted in the eyes of men.

"By thy words thou shalt be justified,"<sup>2</sup>—that is, thy words are a sign of what is in thee, and will vindicate, clear, right thee, if thou art right.

"The publicans justified God,"<sup>3</sup>—that is, vindicated God in what was done, did Him justice in their thoughts, cleared, righted Him.

"He willing to justify himself,"<sup>4</sup>—that is, to vindicate, clear, right himself.

"Ye justify yourselves before men,"<sup>5</sup>—that is,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xii. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Luke vii. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Luke x. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xvi. 15.

vindicate, clear yourselves, make yourselves out to be right.

“This man went down to his house, justified rather than the other,”<sup>1</sup>—that is, vindicated in what he had done, cleared, righted, as an honest, sincere, penitent man before God.

“Not the hearers of the law . . . but the doers of the law are justified,”<sup>2</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, righted, seen to be sincere and true.

“That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings,”<sup>3</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, righted in the eyes of men, as uttering only truth.

“I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified,”<sup>4</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, righted, proved to be right.

“God manifest in the flesh, justified in (or by) the Spirit,”<sup>5</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, righted, proved to be divine.

“Was not Abraham justified by works, when he offered Isaac, his son, on the altar?”<sup>6</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, righted; his professed obedience was proved to be real.

“By works a man is justified, and not by faith only,”<sup>7</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, righted, by the substantial proof of sincerity.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ii. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iii. 4.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 4.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Jas. ii. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Jas. ii. 24.



“Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?”<sup>1</sup>—that is, vindicated, cleared, righted, seen to be true to her promise.

Throughout these passages of the New Testament, as in the previous quotations from the Old Testament, the idea is that of vindicating, or more generally of righting, or rightening. You justify or vindicate, when you show the rights of a case, when you set it right or righten it. But there is another, a scholastic and conventional, meaning of the word, which demands a careful examination.

Theological justification is thus defined by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, in their Shorter Catechism—“An act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us, as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us and received by faith alone.” We are taught to think of a court of justice, God presiding as the judge, man arraigned as a criminal, and deserving to suffer the penalty of the broken law, namely death, eternal death. Man has no defence to offer, no plea of any kind to put forward. But Christ Jesus, the incarnate Saviour interposes, as a Mediator between God and man, declares that he has suffered in the room and stead of man, and therefore claims that

<sup>1</sup> Jas. ii. 25.

man should be acquitted ; declares besides, that in his life and by his death, he has wrought out, in man's name, a perfect obedience, a perfect righteousness, which he needed not on his own account, and therefore claims that this may be imputed to man, even as man's sin was imputed to him, and that man should on this ground not only stand acquitted and pardoned, but should be accepted as perfectly and spotlessly righteous. When a human being, by true faith accepts Christ as the Mediator, trusts in his death for pardon, and in his righteousness for acceptance, then the Great Judge pronounces a sentence of acquittal and of irreversible approval.

It must be obvious at a glance, how perfectly different all this is, from the simple meaning of the word "justify" in the Holy Scriptures, so far as we have yet examined. It can scarcely fail to strike impartial observers, that this includes so much more than the word is ordinarily understood to contain, and is altogether so widely different, that a common English reader of the Bible, however well instructed on general subjects, could never of himself form a conception of it. Those who have been trained from infancy in the theological system, not only may easily read the New Testament in accordance with it, but may find it nearly impossible, without long

and hard effort, to accept any other interpretation. This is the too frequent effect of those arbitrary, technical definitions of Scripture terms which have been so largely introduced into a region where, of all others, it is vitally important that the mind should be preserved perfectly unbiassed. But on the other hand, as a matter of fact, multitudes of educated persons, not trained in the theological system, are perfectly unable to understand the words "justify" and "justification," as used by theologians, and for the sole, sufficient reason, that the conventional is entirely different from the natural meaning. If it be asked by what authority these distinct ideas—forgiveness of sins and acceptance before God as righteous, and that on the ground of a mysterious imputation of sin to the holy, and of holiness to the sinful—have been imported into what we have shown to be the ordinary meaning of a Hebrew, Greek, and English word; if it be asked by what authority a common term has been weighted with such important additions,—I know of none which does not rest ultimately for its support on the exigencies of the theological system. The system needs forensic imagery and language—needs judicial forms of procedure, in order to its exactness and logical completeness. But it seems pardonable to question, whether this can be adopted

as a legitimate and safe canon of biblical interpretation.

Returning to more general considerations, it deserves to be noted, that the root of that class of English words with which the verb "justify" stands connected, is *right*. We have the adjective and the noun, right; the adjective, righteous; and the noun, righteousness, which, in its more general form, rightness, would be an exacter translation. Right, righteous, righteousness, or rightness,—but strangely the verb is "justify," as if it were derived from another root. This departure in form from the allied terms is, at least, not happy, and is almost certain to create a misapprehension in the mind of the mere English reader. At all events, it hides from him a fact which might afford some help in making out the meaning of the sacred text. No violence is done, but, on the contrary, a truer appreciation of the original is likely to be created, if for "justify" we substitute a term cognate to the words derived from the same root. Thus,—right, righteous, righteousness, or rightness; and to righten, or rectify, or 'set right.

It will be easy to show how this slight change of terms bears with beautiful simplicity and force on the actual, spiritual condition of the world. At the root of the whole Bible, underneath all

the teachings of the New Testament, there lies this fundamental idea, that the spirit of man in relation to God is altogether wrong. It has fallen from God, has turned away and moves in a direction quite away from Him, and through all has done, and is doing itself, as well as God, cruel wrong. What it most of all and first of all needs is to be righted or rectified, to be turned back towards Him from whom it has wickedly revolted. Instead of indifference, forgetfulness, resistance, and enmity, what it needs is an earnest, humble, yearning after God, the waking up within it of lowly, childlike trust. "I will arise and go to my Father." Nor let it be forgotten that it is on this issue, on the production of this inward change, that all the influences of God's Providence, God's Spirit, and God's Word, are brought to bear. All the divine manifestations in Jesus Christ our Lord, manifestations of divine purity and wisdom, divine tenderness, and patience, and beauty, and sweetness, and grace, all the mysteries of Incarnation, all the forces of God's self-sacrificing mercy, incarnate, crucified mercy, are directed to one grand end, namely this, that man's soul be rectified, righted, turned back from its wrong position, and that humbled and penitent it may seek God, and with timid trembling faith may begin to trust Him.

This first step—or look—Godward, this incipient but genuine movement of the child-spirit, is justification, rectification, the righting, rightening, setting right of the soul, which before was wholly wrong. Verily the first is not the last step; a hard struggle with evil and with self is before the rightened spirit, an anxious process of inward purification, a life-long work of sanctification—to use the conventional phrase. But this righting or rectifying is first, before anything real can be effected. In order to be sanctified, we must first be justified, righted by faith, turned towards God in penitence and in trust. “It is God that justifieth,” an apostle declares, that righteth, righteneth, setteth right the spirit of man, that turneth it back towards Himself. And His method of righting or justifying is by faith, by the sweet awakening in the soul of simple trust, trust in the revealed mercy of God in Christ. This gentle, humbled, penitent, childlike spirit, at once rightens the erring soul, and changes its relation to its Father, sets it towards Him, turns it right round, and brings it into the attitude of a son, a humble, subdued, confiding son.

Whether this sense of righting or setting right, which we have shown belongs strictly to the literal

signification of the disputed word, and is found fitting in all other cases, be applicable in the passages now to be quoted, must be left to individual judgment to decide.

“All that believe are justified”—cleared, set right—“from all things, from which ye could not be justified”—cleared, set right—“by the law of Moses.”<sup>1</sup>

“Being justified”—righted, set right—“freely by His grace.”<sup>2</sup>

“We conclude that a man is justified”—righted—“by faith,” &c.<sup>3</sup>

“It is one God who shall justify”—righten—“the circumcision by faith,” &c.<sup>4</sup>

“If Abraham were justified”—righted—“by works, he hath whereof to boast.”<sup>5</sup>

“To him that believeth on him that justifieth”—righteneth—“the ungodly.”<sup>6</sup>

“Being justified”—rightened—“by faith, we have peace with God.”<sup>7</sup>

“Much more, being justified”—rightened—“by his blood,” &c.<sup>8</sup>

“Whom he justified”—rightened—“them he also glorified.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iii. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. iii. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. iv. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. iv. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. v. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. v. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Rom. viii. 30.

“Ye are justified”—righted—“in the name of the Lord Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>

“A man is not justified”—righted—“by the works of the law . . . even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified”—righted—“by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law.”<sup>2</sup>

“The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify”—righten—“the heathen by faith.”<sup>3</sup>

“No man is justified”—righted—“by the law.”<sup>4</sup>

“That we might be justified”—righted—“by faith in Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

“Whosoever of you is justified”—righted—“by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”<sup>6</sup>

These, with one addition to be introduced hereafter, are the whole of the instances, furnished by the Old and New Testaments, without a single exception, so far as I know, in which the English word “justify,” as the translation of the Hebrew *Tsādāk*, or of the Greek *δικαίω*, is found in the Sacred Scriptures. The conclusion to which they conduct seems indubitable.

The noun “justification” does not require so extended a criticism as its cognate verb. There are

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. iii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. iii. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Gal. iii. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. v. 4.



only three passages in the whole Bible, and these in the single Epistle to the Romans, a single verse of one chapter, and two verses of the following chapter, in which this favourite term of scholastic theology occurs; and in these it would demand no common ingenuity to discover a foundation for the extensive structure which has been reared upon them. Two distinct words are used by the apostle Paul, both translated in our version "justification." These are *Δικαίωσις* and *Δικαίωμα*. The analogy of the language might have led us to judge that *Δικαίωσις* meant the act, the mode, or the power of rightening, and *Δικαίωμα* the thing righted, or a sentence, or ordinance, righting something. But the apostle employs the two words, apparently without distinction, as if they were quite interchangeable.

"He was delivered for our offences, raised again, *διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν*, for the sake of, on account of, in order to, our justification—*our being set right*." <sup>1</sup>

"The free gift, *χάρισμα*, is of many offences, *εἰς δικαίωμα*, unto, in order to, justification, *in order to our being set right*." <sup>2</sup>

"Even so, *δι' ἐνὸς δικαιώματος*, by the righteousness of one," <sup>3</sup>—a translation which is flagrantly

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 18.

inaccurate, the words admitting of no rendering but some such as this: By one justification, or by one rectifying ordinance, the grace came upon all men, εἰς δικάωσιν ζωῆς, in order to justification of life, in order to a *vital rightening*, or a *rightening of life*.

## SECTION SECOND.

Truths, Answering to Terms of Scripture—Righteousness Rightness—State of Right-en-ed-ness—Rightening-ness—The Power, Act, Mode of Rightening—Imputation—Rightness Imputed because Real—Fact Recognised—Thing Reckoned, What it is, Never, what it is not—Imputation Inevitable—Instructive—Figures of Speech—Judicial Imputation, a Crime.

IN close, indeed, essential connexion with the point we have been discussing, there is another term constantly occurring in the Scriptures, the exact meaning of which it is of the highest importance to ascertain—the term “righteousness,” *Δικαιοσύνη*. The more general word “rightness” is unquestionably as literal a translation as righteousness, and it is more comprehensive, and covers a wide area, which cannot be included in the latter term. Righteousness, according to ordinary usage, is equivalent to holiness, piety, virtue, moral and spiritual goodness. Very frequently in Scripture this is the proper and entire sense of the word. Holiness is rightness, rightness in the

highest sense of all, moral rightness, true rightness of soul. But a thing may be perfectly right without being holy at all. A thing is right, which is fitting in the circumstances and altogether worthy of them, which is proper to be done, which is consistent and wise. That which is holy is always right, but that which is right may have nothing in it, of which the quality holy can be predicated. Rightness is the more accurate translation of *δικαιοσύνη*, because it includes every meaning of which the word is susceptible, which righteousness does not. The narrower, special sense of righteousness, as ordinarily understood, is quite taken in by the more general word, but the more general sense is excluded by the narrower translation.

1. The inward state of those who have been rightened, set right, by faith, is fitly denoted by the word *δικαιοσύνη*; it is a state of rightness in relation to God. Perhaps with greater precision, and in harmony with the forms of the English tongue, it might be called rightenedness, a state of rightenedness.

2. As this inward state is that which God seeks to originate in men, and does originate in fact, it is fitly distinguished as God's rightness or rightenedness, not man's, His kind of rightenedness, what He regards and produces as real rightenedness.

3. God's power and His method of rightening men are also denoted by the term "rightness," *δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ*. With greater precision to English ears, and more in accordance with English idioms, it might be translated, God's righteningness, including both His power and His way of rightening or setting right. At the same time, while the distinctions thus announced are far from being unimportant, and deserve to be carried along with us, the wide term, "rightness," adapts itself without much difficulty to these different shades of meaning, and it might be perplexing to introduce other terms.

The rightness of God—either that inward state in relation to Himself, which He originates in men, or His power or His method of rightening them through faith, is in the New Testament constantly contrasted with law—rightness, or man's own rightness, man's kind of rightness, and his way of righting himself. The prevailing Jewish idea was fulfilled in ceremonial obedience. Instead of the conviction that their spiritual relation to God was wrong, and required first of all to be set right, their highest aspiration was ritual faultlessness, the offering up of all the appointed sacrifices and gifts, submission to all the ordained penalties, and constant homage to the letter of the Mosaic institute. They thus thought to

work out a rightness or rightenedness by law, by obedience to law, their own kind of rightenedness, not God's. The Jewish is only a special and contracted form of the prevailing human idea. Nothing is more common, and in one sense more natural, than the avowal that all which can be expected of human beings is, that they strive to do what is right, and to live holily and justly, as far as they can,—a perfectly good and noble aim in itself, and one with which every Christian soul does and must sympathise. But there is a first thing, prior to all such striving and efforts which our Father seeks at our hands, it is the return of our hearts to Him, in penitence and in trust. Everything must be at fault, because springing out of a wrong centre, till this first step be taken. No efforts of ours to do right can avail, till something of the true child-spirit, which also is the true divine Spirit, born of the Holy Ghost, be awakened within us. This is the only spring of genuine obedience. Hence we read in Romans iii. 20, "By the deeds of the law"—by deeds of law, of any kind, by acts of obedience—"there shall no flesh be justified"—that is rightened—"in His sight." God's rightness, God's kind of rightness, and God's method of rightening, stand in direct contrast to man's kind of rightness; the rightness of law, man's idea of rightening himself by obedience.

In the passages now to be introduced, we deem it obvious that *δικαιοσύνη* is employed in the general sense of rightness, and not in the special sense of righteousness.

“They being ignorant of God’s *rightness*”<sup>1</sup>—God’s kind and way of rightening; it cannot mean holiness, for this would be obviously inapt and useless for the writer’s present aim—“and going about to establish their own (kind of) *rightness*, have not submitted themselves to the righteningness of God,” *God’s way of setting them right*.

“Christ is the end of the law for (in order to) *rightness*”<sup>2</sup>—in order to *rightenedness*—“to every one that believeth.” In every one that believeth, Christ, through this simple faith, accomplishes the great end of all law—the making and keeping men right. Law failed to accomplish this end. Hence it is declared, “What law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God (has done), sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (He) has condemned sin (sentenced it, doomed it to death) in the flesh.” (See Rom. viii. 3.)

“If *rightness* come by law, then Christ is dead in vain.”<sup>3</sup> Righteousness meaning holiness does come by the law, by obedience to the law. The highest end even of the death of Christ, is to cause

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. x. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 21.

righteousness, in the sense of holiness, to come by the law. The statement of the verse is false, unless we adopt the translation, "rightness," and then it is as true as it is obvious. If rightness, if the rightening of the soul in its relation to God, can be effected simply by law, by command, even God's command, then Christ has died to no purpose.

"By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not as yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness"—that kind of rightness in relation to God—"which is by faith."<sup>1</sup> That principle of faith, simple trust in God, which rightened his soul, is the same which rightens every believing soul, and is the only medium of true rightness in relation to the Father.

"The rightness of God"—God's kind of rightness and His way of rightening men—"is revealed from faith to faith."<sup>2</sup> This sentence, as it stands, is nearly unintelligible. A slight change, which the original perfectly admits of, will render the meaning more plain: "The rightness of God by"—not from—"faith"—that kind of rightness which comes only by believing—"is revealed to faith, revealed in order to be believed." The clause immediately

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 17.



following must be noted in its bearing on the point under discussion. As it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Equally true to the original, whether in the Greek or in the Hebrew, from which the sentence is first of all taken, and more significant and apposite is the translation, "The just by faith shall live." The just, the right, the righted by faith, shall live. They are the persons who shall really live, and be secure and blessed. The same quotation is introduced in the Epistle to the Galatians.

"That no man is rightened by the law is evident, for the just [the righted] by faith shall live." "And the law is not of faith, but"—its announcement is this—"the man that doeth them shall live by them."<sup>1</sup> It knows nothing of faith; what it demands is service.

"The rightness of God, without law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets."<sup>2</sup> This cannot be the holiness of God or of Christ. It is that rightening of the soul, through faith, without works of law which God originates. This divine kind of rightness, the apostle declares, "is now manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets," "even the rightness of God, which through faith in Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all that believe."

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 21.

“That I may be found in Him, not having mine own rightness, which is by the law”—by the effort to obey—“but that which is through faith in Christ, the rightness which is of God (which God effects and effects) through faith.”<sup>1</sup>

“If Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin, but the *spirit is life, because of rightness*,”<sup>2</sup>—*by being* rightened.

The Old Testament furnishes some remarkable illustrations of what we here seek to verify.

“Jehovah our *rightness*”<sup>3</sup>—our righteningness—Jehovah who rightens us.

“The Lord is well pleased for (on account of) His rightness-sake,”—His righteningness, His work and way of rightening; “He will magnify the law, and make it honourable,”<sup>4</sup> though He does not save by works of law, but by simple faith. For He hereby originates a living source, a true spirit of obedience.

“I bring near my rightness,”—my kind of rightness, my way of righting the soul; “It shall not be far off and my salvation shall not tarry.”<sup>5</sup> God’s salvation is not rescuing from hell, but delivering from evil within, really setting the soul right and free.

“My salvation is near to come and my rightness

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. xxiii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. xlii. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. xlvi. 13.

to be revealed.”<sup>1</sup> God’s salvation is His way of rightening men, turning them to Himself.

There is a cluster of passages in which, to the word “righteousness” or “rightness,” there is added another of the select terms of scholastic theology, the term “impute,” that is, reckon, or count. Several of these passages are connected with a memorable incident in the life of the patriarch Abraham, while he was yet childless. As he gazed up to the crowding, sparkling stars of a clear Eastern sky, God promised him, “So shall thy seed be.”

“And he believed in the Lord, and he counted [imputed] it to him for (in order to) *rightness* :”<sup>2</sup> in order to his being set right. Abram’s faith was counted, reckoned to be what it was, genuine, and this state of mind, faith, essentially changed and rightened his relation to God, made it a relation of filial confidence, submission, and obedience.

“Abram believed God, and it was counted [imputed] to him”—it was reckoned to be what it was—“for rightness,”<sup>3</sup>—*in order to his being set right*.

“To him that worketh not, but believeth in him that righteneth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for rightness,”<sup>4</sup>—*in order to his being set*

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lvi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iv. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. iv. 5.

*right.* Faith does for him what no works, no acts of obedience could do. It sets his soul right towards God.

“Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness”—whom God counteth right in relation to Himself—“without works.”<sup>1</sup> God counteth a man right who is right, though not righteous—whose spirit is right and rightened in relation to Himself. Out of this right and rightened spirit will spring—the highest form of rightness—righteousness, true obedience.

“Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the rightness which he had, yet being uncircumcised,”—for his soul was rightened, so soon as he gave it up, in simple faith to God, and circumcision was only an outer and later sign of an inward and earlier state—a state which was real, independently of this sign, and before it was given,—“that he might be the Father of all that believe,”—not of the circumcision only, but of all that believe,—“though they be not circumcised; that rightness might be imputed [counted] to them also:”<sup>2</sup> even as it was to him, when he was uncircumcised. That which alone ever rightened and ever rightens the soul is faith—simple trust towards God. The circumcised, if they have not faith, are

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iv. 11.

not rightened in relation to God, and cannot be reckoned right. The uncircumcised, if they have faith, are right as Abraham was, and are reckoned right.

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for rightness,”<sup>1</sup>—in order to his being set right; he was accounted right, and he was right.

“Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for [in order to] rightness; and he was called the Friend of God.”<sup>2</sup>

These passages must impress every mind with the exceeding graciousness and the transparent equity and uprightness of the Most High—His righteous, truthful, open dealing with His sinful children. He imputes faith to those who have faith, and rightness to those who are righted and right. He counts faith to be genuine; and rightness of soul in relation to Himself to be real, simply because they are so, and for no other reason whatever. Among the surest of all verities is this, that God never can count a thing to be what it is not, but ever must only and simply count a thing to be what it is, and no more. As surely as God knows and sees everything and every being exactly as they are, so surely can He never consider, never think them to be other than they are. And if He

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Jas. ii. 23.

can never think them to be what they are not, far less can He give out, or in any way create, the impression that He does so think.

Among men, imputation, both as an idea and as a fact, is very distinctly recognised. Imputed righteousness and imputed sin, in a certain modified sense, are not at all foreign to the thought or to the living experience of the world. A man shall inherit a dishonoured name, and shall succeed to a life of infamy, and penury, and pain, not through any fault of his own, but wholly through the sin of others, with whom he stands connected, will he or will he not. He suffers by a sort of imputation. The son of a criminal is first of all distrusted, and without the slightest fault known against him personally, the judgment and the feelings of his fellow-creatures towards him are deeply prejudiced, in consequence merely of his descent. In effect, it is, as if we imputed to him sins which are not really his, not his at all, and in spite of himself he is compelled, to some extent, to bear the punishment of those sins. The general course of the world seems to look in the same direction. The Judge of all the earth has the most perfect knowledge of each of His intelligent creatures. There can be no iniquity with Him. On the whole and in the end, not a human being shall be able to

find, in the treatment he has received, the slightest violation of equity. But the present is confessedly not a final but a temporary state, a probationary, imperfect, and mixed condition, in which no legitimate, comparative conclusion as to individual character and desert, can be drawn from what is merely visible and outward. "Suppose ye that those Galileans (whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices) were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all the men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Amidst the inevitable complications and confusions of the present state of being, one event often befalls the good and the bad indiscriminately. Natural evils, public and special calamities overtake men, wholly irrespective of their individual character. Slavery and war, robbery and murder, wicked legislation, and demoralising principles and habits, entail endless evils on innocent multitudes and on generations unborn. The sins and faults of men, by a species of imputation, come down on those who had no share whatever in originally perpetrating them.

On the other hand, the character which a good and great man has gained by his personal virtues, is bequeathed to his children. The world is prepared beforehand to respect and trust the son, for the father's sake, and to put to his account excellences not really his at all. Certain races and lines of descent possess a kind of imputed worth altogether apart from their individual qualities. A nation shall be exalted in the reputation which belongs only to a single man in it. Because that man was born, and lived, and died in the land, the whole people of it shall have a glory reflected on them, to which, on personal grounds, they have no claim whatever.

There is strong reason in all this. It is a patent fact, make of it what we may, but it is a fact very sufficiently based in truth and justice. It is only right to cherish and to express respect for genuine excellence, wherever it is found. It is only right to keep alive in ourselves and others the memory of such excellence; and when the good man has passed away, it would be a crime not to guard his name with tender jealousy, and not to deal lovingly, for his sake, with those whom he leaves behind. On the other hand, it is only right to visit crime with reprobation, to maintain a salutary dread of coming into contact with it,



and to avoid those who may be conceived to have inherited its taint. But all the while, it is never to be forgotten, as an unassailable principle, that real moral worth and real moral demerit are not, and cannot be in any sense or in any degree, transferable or imputable. No rightly constituted mind imagines for a moment that they are; the idea is not only false, but impossible and absurd. If there be, as we have seen there is, an inevitable imputation, whereby men are often involved indiscriminately in the same external good or evil; and if there be, besides, an instinctive imputation of good and of evil from father to son, which on some grounds is honourable to our nature and is also not without its uses in fostering virtue, and in punishing vice; in both cases alike, it is only by a figure of speech, that the word "imputation" is employed at all. It is not supposed to be a reality. We do not reckon or count, no one reckons a man to be either good or bad, because his father was the one or the other. He is really good or bad in himself, and on no other account whatever, and is neither better personally, nor worse personally, from the mere fact that his father was an eminent saint, or a notorious criminal.

In a case of law, when one man pays the debt of another, and thus saves him from punishment,

it is never reckoned or counted, never by any species of legal fiction considered, that the first owed the debt. The debt is not imputed to him. It is thoroughly understood that he is not the debtor. The second is the debtor, and cannot, without falsehood, be reckoned or counted to be not the debtor. In the highest imaginable case, if a friend were to suffer imprisonment or death, in order to save a criminal who had been convicted and sentenced, it could never be thought by any sane man, could never be reckoned or judged, that the crime was transferred to the friend, or could possibly be transferred, and that the criminal in consequence of this transference or imputation was innocent. But in simple fact, it is more than questionable whether such a case as is supposed has ever been historically verified. If it have, it must unhesitatingly be pronounced not an honour but a disgrace, and a crime in human law. It may often be wise and right to forgive an evil-doer, or to modify his punishment, but to take away life which has not been forfeited, or even liberty, is an atrocious offence against the plainest obligations of equity. However willing a man may be to sacrifice himself for another, at least human law can never sanction, cannot even tolerate such enormity, without

stepping altogether out of its sphere, and incurring unmitigated reprobation.

The reference of divine procedure to the analogies of human law has been misleading and disastrous. It is most true that God is the supreme judge of His creatures, and is very often so distinguished in the Holy Scriptures. He judges every rational being, good or bad—unerringly, righteously, mercifully, He judges. At every instant, the judgment of the Holy One, in reference to every human soul, is fixed, because at every instant, the Holy One sees every human soul exactly as it is. It is most right and wise to keep firm hold of this grand truth, and it may be lawful besides to allow the imagination to body it forth, by the aid of whatever analogies and accessories it can create. It may be quite lawful to picture a court of justice, a judgment seat, God enthroned as judge, and man arraigned before Him. It may be quite lawful to picture a suit conducted with all the usual forms of law, the charge made on the one side, and admitted or denied on the other side, and the prisoner at the bar asked to show cause why sentence against him should not go forth. Such a picture, besides, it is quite possible might be so drawn, as to produce a deep impression on certain minds, and to lead to very salutary results. The obvious cause is this, that underneath the selected

imagery, there is a real and great spiritual truth, of which the mind may take hold and into which it may gain a profounder insight—the truth of God's perfect, certain, and instant knowledge of our actual state and desert. But we deal falsely with men and with sacred things, unless we make known that this is all which is meant to be conveyed, and that the picture containing this truth is a picture and nothing more—our creation, not God's. To treat the picture as a reality, and to found religious doctrine on its separate details, details which mere human fancy has wrought into shape, is surely wrong, and must be very dangerous. The underlying truth that God sees at every moment, the very state of every human soul, is of all others most momentous and most sure. But all beyond this is wholly unreal, is mere pure imagination.

It is highly probable that the idea of this deceptive, spiritual scene-painting has been taken from the doctrine of a judgment-day, at the final consummation, when ages beyond reckoning shall have passed away. But the two differ in the most essential respects. The supposed picture is of a present experience, during the earthly life, and it is in every point the mere baseless fabric of a dream. There is no court of justice, no judgment-seat, no trial, no process of charge and defence, no verdict

and no condemnation. The simple fact is, that human sin is discovered, is perfectly seen, and is judged, condemned, and punished in the instant it is committed. All its consequences, especially all its physical consequences, are not at once realised. but essentially, inwardly, its penal effect is immediate. When it is committed, no opportunity of explaining it is offered, no defence, no palliation is asked for, would be listened to, or is possible, just because the exact amount of demerit which belongs to it is seen at once without the possibility of mistake. In regard to the spiritual government of God, and to the spiritual laws of the universe, sin and punishment are inseparable and simultaneous. Without trial, or judge, or judgment, sin instantaneously punishes itself in the soul. It may, indeed, and does prepare for itself, in the evolutions of earthly providence, palpable, material penalties, which are not yet endured, but the reallest punishment descends on the instant, and comes out of the very nature of sin itself. No possibility, legal, judicial, or otherwise, of escape exists, save by the expulsion and destruction of the dire root of evil. Hence justification is not a process of law at all, nor the mere formal act of a judge; it is a real, inward, entire change. The man is really rightened, not legally acquitted; that which was wrong in him in

relation to God is set right—is begun to be set right. He is turned to God, instead of being turned away from Him. Beholding God in Christ, he no longer resists the divine appeal, but yields at last with his whole heart to a loving, forgiving, much enduring, self-sacrificing Father.

The simplicity, the beauty, and the power of Christ's own gospel, are irresistible. No uncouth, hard terms meet us here, no nice, legal definitions, no endless, fretting distinctions, and no guarded, inflexible forms, barring the way on this hand and on that—nothing but pure love, immaculate, infinite, self-sacrificing, holy love. The simple short tale has often been rehearsed, but it is overpowering, and warm, and fresh still. The Great God loves the soul He hath made, and would save it. But even He cannot save it, except by setting it right. Away from Him, it is away from life. The life must come near, must come down, must come into man, and must find a way to the sacred depths of his spiritual nature. God must make man's heart His own, must draw and turn it to Himself, by the pure omnipotence of love. And He does. "The Life," the Living One "was manifested," was embodied, was incarnated. Through Christ, through the living Christ, highest of all through the dying Christ, as

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the chosen medium,<sup>1</sup> (Mediator,) very God comes near to man, and man turns to draw near to God. The divine Spirit touches the human spirit, and the touch is almighty. Divine life breathes on human death; divine light dawns on human darkness. "The Life," "The Living One" is the Light of men. And "the True Light is the Life of men."

<sup>1</sup> See note, p. 29.





## CHAPTER VII.

### SACRIFICE.

Is God Essentially Self-sacrificing?—Lesson to Universe—Sacrificial Rite, Universal—Æsthetic Gradation—Contrary to Facts—Animal Sacrifice—Earliest Form of Offering—Taking of Animal Life, Revolting—In Name and by Command of God—1. Provision for Human Sustenance—2. Merciful Protection to Animal Creation—Sacredness of Life—Worship of Life-giver—Surrender back of His own—Virtual Self-surrender—3. Silent Confession of Life Forfeited and of Sin—Early Revolting Corruptions of Sacrificial Rite.



IT is an old idea, that the Creation is grounded in sacrifice, divine self-sacrifice, and that the universal fabric of nature is based and built up on this mysterious fact. Creation began, it is thought, in an act of self-abandonment; after it had fallen into evil, it was redeemed through the humiliation and suffering of the Incarnate, and it shall be perpetuated for ever in blessedness and purity by the holy spirit of self-surrender and love. It was a sacrifice on the part of God to create at all, for in the very act of creating, He brought Himself into relation with inferior being,—conditioned, limited, sacrificed Himself. And, in human conception, the world, as it now is, peopled by creatures endowed with will, and capable of resisting their Maker, and of introducing, as they have in fact introduced, immense evil, can be only a burden, if not a grief.

The universe at its birth was a joy to its Creator, and it may yet become, in an immeasurably higher sense, an eternal, divine joy; but, like other births, this also, it is conceived, was accomplished through

humiliation and sacrifice. The literal cross of the divine man of Nazareth was the late outward symbol of an earlier, an unseen cross, which had been serenely borne by the Infinite Father, ever since the beginning of the ages. Not on Calvary, for the first time, did God sacrifice Himself for the sake of His creatures. He only proclaimed there, in an impressive and awful form, what, since the first moment of time, had been a universal, underlying, all-embracing truth.

It might be unwise either wholly to accept, or wholly to reject, these peculiar speculations. That they have at least some foundation of reality it is impossible to deny, and they may have a bearing, more important than is at first discerned, on the spiritual discipline and on the ultimate destiny of the intelligent universe. Beyond question, for all time and all temporal beings, sacrifice lies at the root of real good. True nobility, true greatness, and all highest spiritual excellence, grow only out of this strong subsoil. Universally, at least for men, a cross is the way to a crown. The hard-won victory over self and sin, which issues in the free, entire, and eternal yielding up of our will to the good will of God, can only be the fruit of sore conflict and of stern self-sacrifice.

But a truth so vital as this, and one which is,

besides, on many accounts, so repellant, both deserved and needed to be impressed on the universe by extraordinary methods. Hence it is conceived that the Loving Father, from the first, stooped to teach His creatures by His own example, and exhibited Himself, as the grand instance and pattern of self-sacrifice. The lesson, early taught, was thereafter wrought into the very texture of the entire web of finite existence, comes up, ever and again, in broad and strong outlines, on the lengthening woof of time, and at last was enstamped in colours that shall never fade, whose hue is caught from the mingled shades of Bethlehem and Nazareth, Gethsemane and Jerusalem. Far off, in the distant past, where the awful line divides time from eternity, in the moment and the act of creation, as on a lofty summit, to be seen by all the ages and the races following, the Great Being imprinted and lifted up a divine cross. Ever onward through the generations He drew the world's eye to the awful symbol; and at last, by the anguish and the shame of Calvary, He appealed, and continues to appeal, to the heart of the universe, that it may open wide to the lesson of suffering and of sacrifice.

The universality of the sacrificial rite among all nations, as well in modern as in ancient times, is not unrelated to this train of thought—is perhaps best

interpreted by it. And closely connected with the universality of the rite is the question of its origin, whether divine or human. The early Christian fathers, with few exceptions, and along with them many ancient and eminent Jewish Rabbis, maintained the purely human origin of sacrifice. It was recognised and expressly sanctioned by God, but it was first of all the thought and the act of man. Were it possible to ascertain with certainty what the earliest form of sacred offering was, whether strictly sacrificial or consisting only of the fruits of the earth, this would, in a great degree, determine the question of their divine or human origin. But the point is one of great difficulty, and is the subject of a very wide diversity of opinion. Besides, the field of inquiry is by no means perfectly open. One is not at liberty, in such a region, to indulge freely in speculation and in fancy, and to form out, as it shall strike his imagination, an artistic and æsthetic theory of the origin and the early form of religious worship. Were it otherwise, there would be no difficulty in picturing, as many have actually done, a state of comparative innocence and inexperience, the juvenile, almost infantile, state of the human race, in which very childish and rude notions of God prevailed. In such a state, we could imagine that natural taste, and the sense of propriety, and

of common gratitude, might suggest the presentation to God of some visible token of reverence and of homage. First of all, the most simple and beautiful objects in nature would be selected; wild flowers would be laid upon the altar, as an acknowledgment of the All-beautiful and the All-good. In the progress of the religious idea, fruits, as more valuable, would be added to flowers. Thereafter, as more valuable still, the produce of the fields—corn, and oil, and wine—would express the thankfulness of the creature to the Creator. Last of all, and still increasing in material value, and therefore more expressive of the respect and submission of the worshipper, the firstlings of the flock and of the herd would be presented to God, and be either wholly offered up in His honour, or so partially surrendered as to make the whole, in a high sense, sacred.

Such in fact, it has been conceived, is the natural history and the gradual development of the rite of sacrifice—in the first instance a merely human idea, extending itself, by degrees, with the progress of knowledge and of material cultivation, and perhaps, also, with the deepening consciousness of evil. But it is legitimate to ask, in all simplicity, is not this pure fancy, a dream, a beautiful dream indeed, but nothing more than a mere dream of the imagina-

tion? Where is the evidence of this fancied, natural gradation, in sacred offerings, from flowers to animal sacrifice? It exists not. Where are those innocent forefathers of our race who, in their juvenile, grateful, unsuspecting sentiments towards God, laid flowers on His altar, in token of their beautiful, simple faith? They are not to be found. The solitary thing favouring this idea at all has not long ago been put forward by some students of Hindoo mythology. From the most ancient of the sacred books of Asia, they are disposed to infer that the produce of the garden and the field must have been presented to the gods before animal life was sacrificed. But in this region, investigation is yet comparatively immature, and the inference, which is but an inference, is one which it is far from unlikely more thorough research may set aside. In all other regions, the evidence is distinctly to this effect, that flowers and fruits, instead of preceding sacrifices, were added to them as a matter of taste, and for the sake of embellishment. As we search back into the remote past, under the guidance of authentic history, or even of popular tradition, we find not simple, but very gross and dishonouring, conceptions of the divine nature, and not beautiful, but very barbarous and revolting, modes of religious worship. The civilisations of the early world were truly mar-



vellous, but they were wholly material, not spiritual at all. Majestic temples were reared, and gorgeous ceremonies were observed, but we look in vain for an influence descending from them to exalt and ennoble the objects of worship, or to simplify and purify the forms of sacred service.

The ancient Phœnicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Indians, Greeks, and Romans, supply no evidence of a supposed progressive development from simple to bloody rites, and no illustration of the comparative innocence and childlike spirit of early faith. The very reverse of this is the solemn, sad truth. Animal sacrifices, numerous and revolting, are among the earliest things which meet us in the history of ancient nations. Among the Greeks and Romans, whose annals are best known, animal sacrifice, from the very earliest period, was identified with divine worship. It is almost decisive of the whole question; that in that holy volume<sup>1</sup>—whose introductory por-

<sup>1</sup> I do not for a moment presume to determine for others such a question as the date of the Mosaic writings. But it is no presumption to form a judgment for one's-self respecting conflicting evidences which are put forward. By all means, let the question be left open to discussion and criticism on all sides. But it is not conducive to a wise, final determination to assume, as is too often done by one class of writers, and not very modestly, that the matter is settled for all time, and that those who attach weight to the very strong evidence on the other side, and believe in the early date of the Pentateuch, must be either ignorant or prejudiced. This is not the mode in which the spirit of truth reveals or vindicates itself.

tions, in spite of German and British critics, can be proved, as we venture to judge, not on presumptive or conjectural ground, but on what competent scholars regard as strong historical evidence, to be the earliest authentic writings in the world—and in the first notice given of divine worship there,<sup>1</sup> animal sacrifice, as well as the fruit of the ground, is specially mentioned. The only other instances afterwards named in Holy Scripture, up to the time of Moses, those of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are precisely to the same effect. And in the Mosaic economy, its prominent, distinguishing feature, from its commencement to its close, may be left to speak for itself. On the whole, in the present stage of inquiry, the preponderance (at the least) of reliable evidence is in favour of the conclusion, that animal sacrifices were the earliest form of religious worship.

The question is, In what can animal sacrifices have originated? Shall we say, in the unprompted, unaided reason and conscience of man, or in a divine intimation and command? The individual conviction is here expressed, that not man, but God must have been the author of the sacrificial rite. The very idea of acknowledgment to God at all, of outward material acknowledgment to God, not in the form of sacrifice, but even in the presentation of flowers and

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 3, 4.

fruits, could never have been spontaneously adopted, far less originated by the human mind. We, with our churches, and chancels, and altars, and vestments, and vessels, and flowers, and ornaments, forget that we have grown up, through a long process, and by the slow teaching of ages, into the later thoughts which are conceived to demand or to justify these things. But man in his original condition had the very first step in this long process to learn. In his untaught, inexperienced simplicity and naturalness, would it not occur to him at once to ask, and would it not disabuse his mind of all idea of material acknowledgment to God, when he asked himself, "What can such presentations be, or do, to an unseen, spiritual Being? how can they affect or influence Him in any way?" We can readily conceive that men in the primitive ages might be natively predisposed, and prepared to believe that their Creator was not indifferent to the state of their minds, and was not ignorant of their joy or their sorrow, their thankfulness or their penitence. We can readily conceive that they might spontaneously utter and express these affections in the way that natural instinct dictates, and that penitence and sorrow would reveal themselves in the sadness of the countenance, in flowing tears, and in sounds and words of lamentation. We can readily conceive that, in the warm gratitude and

the gushing joy of their hearts, they might deck *themselves* with flowers, and sing and make merry and feast together on the fruits and the produce of God's earth. But to offer anything to Him, to make a present of anything *to* God, who possesses all things ! how could this be ? What meaning could it have, which was not either palpably absurd or deeply insulting ? How vast is the leap from what is natural and credible to what seems contradictory and foolish ! Where were men to place their flowers and fruits, that they might be nearer to God, or more under His eye, than if they were left where they grew ? And place them wherever they might, the offerers would see that there, where they placed them, they lay, untouched, unnoticed, till they wasted, decayed, and perished. There is a deep, wide gulf between religious sentiments and affections and any outward, material *offering* to an unseen and spiritual Being, — a gulf across which man himself could never have thrown a pathway. We conclude that the idea of outward, material offering to God must have been a divine suggestion, not an unprompted, spontaneous birth of the human mind.

Whatever truth there be in the course of thought we have pursued, it bears with tenfold force upon the fact that animal sacrifices were, as we judge, the earliest form of sacred offering. All must admit that

in itself, sacrifice is a coarse and cruel rite. The question is, Could man of himself merely, by any natural process of thought or feeling combined, have come to think and believe that such a rite stood in close relation, in most holy relation, to the blessed God? Could he ever have come to regard it, as not only innocent and not only praiseworthy, but most sacred, a solemn act of piety? We are so habituated to the idea, and the word, sacrifice, so trained in the notion of the connexion of sacrifice with sin and with divine forgiveness, that it is only by a severe effort we are able to conceive of it naturally and impartially, and in itself merely. But suppose the entire absence of all our training and associations and modes of thinking,—suppose primitive man, with only his mere judgment and conscience, his natural mode and power of looking at things, and his personal experience to guide him,—the question is, could he, in this case, of himself have come to believe that the death of a beast could in any way influence or bear any possible relation to, the mind of his God? Suppose the sense of sin in his soul ever so deep, suppose his fear of punishment and his dread of divine anger ever so overwhelming, could he of himself have imagined that God would be appeased towards him, and would find satisfaction in the sufferings of an innocent and helpless animal?

It seems impossible to think so. What dictate of natural conscience, what principle of common equity, what law of the understanding, what process of fair reasoning could have led him to such a conclusion? Not one. From what premises could he argue, on what grounds could he rest his belief? There were none. Even supposing that his notions of God were of the grossest kind, supposing that he imagined God to be altogether such an one as himself, or worse than himself, an implacable, revengeful Being, who delighted in blood and death and revelled in the agonies of His creatures, this of itself would be enough to convince him that such a Being could never be contented with the sufferings of a mere animal, substituted for the far acuter and deeper sufferings of a rational man. A divine suggestion to the human soul, but only this, solves all the difficulties and perfectly meets all the circumstances of the case. It seems reasonable to think that it must have been in obedience to God, as it certainly was in solemn acknowledgment of God, that, first of all, irrational animals were slain. But the rite once ordained, the act once familiar, the notion once planted in the mind, all thereafter is comparatively plain. The sacrifice of animal life would become a part of the understood, accepted, common knowledge of mankind, would be preserved and extended,

as a tradition, where the fact of its origin was unknown, and would gather around itself, in the progress of time, all manner of ideas, false and true, according to the character and tendencies of individuals, nations, and ages.

The first mention of sacrifice in the Holy Scriptures almost compels the belief, that it was by no means the first time that such a thing had taken place. "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." No special attention is drawn to the fact, as if it were altogether novel and extraordinary. It is simply named as a thing quite understood and perfectly usual. So far as the testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures goes, animal sacrifice certainly dates not long after the creation of man. There is a kind of traditionary, hereditary notion, widely prevalent, to the effect that the food of primitive man was vegetable, and that after the apostasy for the first time animal food was used. Let no undue weight be attached to this notion. It may have no authority at all. But quite apart from this, it is in itself highly probable, we venture to think it all but certain, that it was by divine suggestion, first of all, that animal life was taken, in order that animal substance might be used for human food. It needed such a

suggestion, first, to justify man in destroying animal life, and, second, to prompt him to this act. The taking of life, in any case, on any ground, is revolting and abhorrent to nature. We shrink from it, we shudder at the sight of it. If it be a necessity, it is a barbarous and brutal necessity, and no ordinary force is required to overcome that deep repugnance to it, with which all but very coarse natures are possessed. It is quite true that our instincts and our structure, beyond doubt, place us in the order of carnivorous animals. But let us carefully mark how much this involves. We are formed by nature to be flesh-eaters; but whose flesh—whether that of our own race, or that of inferior creatures—is a point wholly undetermined by our structure. So far as structure is concerned, we have precisely the same right, neither less nor more, to feed upon one another as to take the life of any animal, in order to appease our fleshly instincts. Might is not right, and all our appetites must be under law to reason and to God. Hence we argue that the Being who formed our nature, Himself impelled to the legitimate method of preserving it, and appointed for our needs the death of the inferior tribes. At the same time, we cannot doubt that a deeper lesson, in harmony with the great facts of the creation, the redemption and the ultimate per-



fection of the universe, was involved—a lesson reaching to the inner, spiritual nature, and suggesting that life is sustained only by the sacrifice of life. All life, vegetable as well as animal, lives only by the death of other forms of being. Truest of all, the higher life thrives by the sacrifice of the lower outer life. Man rises to God, only out of the depths of conflict and suffering. By wholly giving himself up, he gains himself. By simply but absolutely surrendering his will to the good will of God, he becomes a freeman and a conqueror. By crucifying the flesh, the spirit is crowned with true glory. By dying he lives.

The rite of sacrifice was, first of all, merely the divine provision for human sustenance. But in connexion with this, there is an additional fact to be noted—a manifest and merciful protection was thrown around the lower creation. Animal life was exalted into a sacred thing, and the taking it away was hallowed as a solemn act of religion. From the first, God taught His rational offspring that a deed in itself strange and revolting must not be ventured heedlessly or wantonly—must be transacted under a distinct sense of His presence and His rights, and must in fact be nothing less than a surrender back to Him of that which was wholly His—a true act of worship. In this connexion, it is re-

markable that through the whole duration of the Mosaic dispensation, the persons, save in exceptional instances, who slew the animals used for food by the Israelites were the priests. In Leviticus xvii. 3, 4, the Israelites are expressly prohibited from killing any animal for food without first offering it to the Lord, and having it slain by the priest, before the door of the tabernacle. To this day, we believe, among the scattered descendants of Abraham sacred officers have to do with every animal which is used for food. It is even yet more remarkable and more decisive that, in killing animals to be used for food, Mohammedans, who entirely abjure the rite of sacrifice, up to this hour invariably, as the knife descends to cut the throat of the creature, utter the words, "Bismillah,"—"In the name of God." No good Mussulman will eat the flesh of an animal which has not in this way, as they judge, been made sacred to God. The false and corrupt religious ideas, too often associated with the rite of sacrifice, render it hard, if not impossible, to reconcile it with just conceptions of the Great Being. But so far as we have gone in these hints as to its primitive meaning and design, it is impossible not to regard it as a provision altogether worthy of God—most merciful and most wise—unspeakably more merciful

and more wise than the very best of our existing Christian civilisations are able to exhibit.

It has been suggested that the notion of man and God eating together, in token of reconciliation, was involved in the primitive institution of sacrifice. The form of the altar, literally a raised table, and the fact that the priests (and the offerers at their own homes) partook of the animals sacrificed, are not without weight. The mode in which federal treaties or compacts were made and confirmed in ancient times has, perhaps, greater force still. When a disagreement had been made up, or when a compact or covenant was entered into, the transaction was hallowed by sacrifice. An animal was slain, and divided into two portions; and the contracting parties passed between the divided sacrifice, as much as to say, "Let us no more henceforth be divided;" or, "So be it done to us, if we violate this covenant." Thereafter they sat down together, and feasted on the sacrifice. No unprejudiced inquirer can fail to learn here, that the taking of animal life was held to be a sacred thing, and to make sacred, to some extent, whatever was connected with it. It is plain, also, that the God to whom life belongs was here invoked to witness and to sanction what was transacted. But beyond this, all is unreal and contradictory. It

was not true that God did eat with men, and took His place along with them at the altar. There is nothing to show that they entertained this notion; and if they did, it was not only a mere fancy, but a gross and coarse, a degrading and dishonouring fancy.

The natural and rational analysis of the primitive meaning of sacrifice guides us to one other, but only to one other fact, in addition to the two already produced—the fact of human sin. Man had forfeited his life. Every being who sins forfeits his right to live. In the very act of sin he inflicts a death upon himself, and strikes a mortal blow at his spiritual nature. It was not unworthy of God, but most worthy, to furnish, in the very mode in which even the outer life of his rational creatures was preserved, a perpetual, material symbol of the deeper evil which they had brought upon themselves, and to extort from them a silent, but significant confession of sin. The teaching of the slain animal from the first, and, later still, of the altar, was that human life was forfeited life, life forfeited by transgression.

Few things are now less thought of, because so common, than the death of animals, for the purposes of daily subsistence. But it was not so from the beginning. That deed, which, in token of disgust, we call butchery, had at first a very hallowed mean-

ing. It was done in the name and by the command of God, and was understood to be a solemn act of acknowledgment and of reverent worship. It taught the sacredness of all life, and was a surrender back to God of what was supremely His—a virtual self-surrender on the part of the offerer. Last of all, it distinctly involved a silent confession of dependence and of sin. In itself, merely, the act had no sacredness, it became sacred because it was the ordained symbol of that spiritual acknowledgment which God required from His rational creatures. But the material act was far easier than this mental exercise. One of the deepest tendencies of men, in the sphere of religion, is to substitute the outward for the inward, to put religious rites in the place of religious convictions and feelings. Too often, the abundant care and pains bestowed on outward forms, are only the sure sign how utterly we have lost the inward spirit of worship to which alone God looks. It is not hard to conceive how men learned to count the mere rite of sacrifice, apart from its inward meaning, a thing good and holy in itself and pleasing to God, and how they laboured, in their own perverse way, to render the rite more imposing and more awful. It is not wonderful that in successive ages, utterly false ideas were so crowded around it, as to bury out of sight the divine simplicity. As the

degeneration of the human races deepened, and as men's thoughts of God became more dishonouring and more gross, we have no difficulty in imagining how they descended lower and ever lower still, until at last they believed that the more numerous and the more revolting the sacrifices which they brought to the altar, the more likely they were to please the Great Being. Even in the age of the patriarch Abraham, the inhabitants of Canaan had sunk into the most fearful debasement, and entertained the most revolting notions of the Supreme. He was transformed in their conceptions into a monster of cruelty, whose anger could be appeased only by a horrible and hideous worship, and to whose implacable revenge they must offer up not animal only but human life, and even the life of their own offspring.<sup>1</sup>

We turn from the abuses and corruptions of a sacred ordinance to its solemn restoration and re-enactment by its divine Author.

<sup>1</sup> The reasonings in the chapter following are quite apart from the view of sacrifice presented in this chapter, and rest, as will be perceived, on their own independent grounds.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MOSAIC ECONOMY.

SECTION FIRST.—ITS CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC.

SECTION SECOND.—ITS TRUE MEANING AND INTERPRETATION.





SECTION FIRST—CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC OF THE  
MOSAIC ECONOMY.

Religion of Blood—Endless Sacrifices—Rite Simplified and Purified—Appeal through Senses to Soul—Two Ideas—Human Sustenance and Divine Worship—Paschal Lamb, a Supper—Also, Act of Worship—No Idea of Expiation—How Blood, Atonement for Soul—Blood and Fat, God's Portion—Rest for Food—Kāphār, ἱλάσκομαι, Atonement—Not Expiation—Proof Passages.

THERE is a painful recoil in many minds, from more than one aspect of the Jewish institutions, and of the entire dispensation founded upon them. The chief cause of offence is the place to which the rite of sacrifice is exalted, being not simply or occasionally recognised along with other and more spiritual acts of worship, but constituting the grand, pervading, and perpetual characteristic of the economy. Daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, on innumerable special occasions, and for innumerable personal, domestic, social, private, and national causes, innocent animals were slain on the altar of Jehovah. No ordinary arithmetic could compute

the sacrifices, of all kinds, which were offered up, in whole or in part, in the tabernacle first and afterwards in the temple. Such a narrative as that of the first dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, when Solomon and all Israel with him offered sacrifice before the Lord, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep, bears no distant affinity, it is maintained, in this particular feature to a pagan festival.

It were easy, were it here needful, to exhibit the widest distinction between Judaism and all the forms of ancient idolatry. None of the revolting impurities of Gentile worship, and none of the abominations of human sacrifice, find a place in the law of Moses. And then, instead of sacrifices to many gods, the many sacrifices were all offered to the One only God, the true object of worship. Even the number, the modes, and the exact times of holy offerings were fitted to act with beneficial power, on an undisciplined multitude, to train them to habits of order and of thoughtful care, and to inspire them with the idea of the constancy, the awe, and the unfeigned consecration which were demanded in divine worship. But when all this and much more has been advanced, the question is unanswered, "How can we connect the living God with a religion of blood?" for hour by hour of every day, the altar of Jehovah streamed and reeked with blood.

It is not favourable to modern ideas, that some of the wisest and most admired of the early Christian fathers vindicated the Mosaic institutions, by reference to the religious rites of Egypt and other ancient nations. Had they, in that day, sympathised with the later scholastic mode of interpreting the rite of sacrifice, their course must have been the very opposite. After the manner of more modern apologists, they had only to show that Moses was a type of Christ, that the Jewish was a prefiguration of the latter Christian dispensation, and that the legal sacrifices were meant to prepare the world for the true sacrifice of Christ. This would very readily and legitimately have accounted for whatever seems repulsive in the ancient ritual. But not a word to this effect, do these primitive disciples of our Lord utter. Instead of any such reasoning, they point to the condition of the whole Gentile world, and especially to the bloody altars of Egypt, with which the Israelites had long been familiar, and in services like to which they had long been trained. Hence they argued that the institution of sacrifice by Moses was an inevitable necessity, and that had it not been sanctioned, as it was, by God, and placed under special and exact laws, it would certainly have been introduced by the Israelites themselves, independently of divine sanction. It is strange but true.

The ancient, Christian argument involved this most dishonouring conception—that God was obliged to succumb to a necessity, and was able only to regulate and modify what it was impossible for Him to prevent.

The original meaning of the rite of sacrifice, if we have correctly interpreted it, conducts us without recoil, and by an obvious and easy process of thought, to all the distinguishing services of Judaism. That rite was first of all the divine provision for human sustenance; but it was a sacred rite from the beginning, and was ordained and understood to be a true act of worship—a distinct acknowledgment of God, and a virtual self-surrender to Him. It was the primitive, universal form of divine worship—the divinely-appointed mode in which men expressed outwardly their reverent recognition of the Great Creator. So far from yielding to a necessity, and sanctioning what He had never ordained, but only winked at, God, in the dispensation of Moses, simply restored and re-enacted, with great solemnity, His own significant ordinance. Away from all which the ignorance, and the errors, and the fears of men had originated, He reconnected the taking of animal life with the presence and the rights of the unseen Life-giver, and reclaimed, in this significant act, the homage and the love of the human soul.

It is important to bear in mind that the entire ancient economy was an appeal directed, first of all, to the senses of the Israelites, ultimately to their judgment and conscience; but first, through the medium of strong impressions made on their animal nature. The reason is manifest; it was not possible, by any other means, to have addressed an effective appeal to such a people, as the Israelites were, at this period of their history, a nation of slaves, emasculated and ground down by two centuries of the most galling bondage—a savage, ignorant, and unintelligent multitude. The barbaric gorgeousness of the tabernacle, with its coverings, and ornaments, and colourings; the outer court; the holy place and the holy of holies; the dresses of the priest and of the high priest; the altars of sacrifice and of incense; the gold and silver vessels of the sanctuary; the numberless holy days and festivals; the minute, punctilious, rigorous details; the washings, and cleansings, and changings of robes; the times, the modes, and all the petty arrangements of ceremonies and services, and the never-ending offerings on all sorts of occasions and for all sorts of purposes,—had one manifest design, to affect the senses of the people, and through their senses to convey to their minds, with extraordinary impressiveness, the thought of God—a God ever near to them, ever

observant of them, and whose watchfulness was unceasing and minute.

But if the rite of sacrifice, like the entire dispensation to which it belonged, addressed the outward senses, that rite had in itself a wonderful simplicity and directness of meaning, such as the humblest might at once comprehend. And this simplicity and directness were restored, preserved, and even intensified by the peculiar institutions of the ritual law of Moses. The sacrificial ordinance—cleared from all the pagan ideas which had been imported into it, and from all the pagan abominations which had been associated with it—was made once more, what it had been at the first, simply the outward mode, whereby men gave token of their reverence and their homage, whilst at the same time and by the same act, God mercifully provided for them the means of subsistence.

The first mention of sacrifice in the history of the Jews, as a people, furnishes a significant, almost startling, confirmation of this view. The Paschal lamb formed the supper of that night when they were driven out of Egypt. It was eaten with bread hastily and imperfectly prepared, and with bitter herbs, and amidst other signs of the perilous crisis they had reached. But it was eaten, and it supplied a meal of animal food very needful and strengthen-

ing for the anxious journey they were about to undertake. At the same time, the slaying of the lamb, as in all cases, was in the name and by the command of God—it was essentially a sacred rite, an act of homage and submission to the unseen Jehovah, under whose protection they were to go forth from Egypt, and who, on that memorable night, was to shield them from the dire calamity soon to come down on the inhabitants of the land. It is only reasonable to conjecture that the religious system afterwards established by divine command may possibly be found to be in strict harmony with this original fact. The two ideas at the first conjoined—human sustenance and divine worship—were certainly embodied in the sacrifices under the law of Moses. The whole burnt-offering, symbolic of extraordinary and entire consecration to God, had its fitting place in that law; but usually, generally, whilst in every proper sacrifice, a certain part was consumed on the altar, in token of surrender to God, the remainder was the food either of the priests or of the offerers themselves. On this principle, a consistent and honourable interpretation is supplied of the fact already referred to in connexion with the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, when 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were sacrificed. It was no outburst of brutal savageism, and no mere

cruel and wicked waste of animal life. The occasion was one of extraordinary thanksgiving and rejoicing—of solemn worship, indeed, but also of feasting and of national exhilaration. While God was reverently acknowledged, and whilst the rich celebrated a joyous holiday, hundreds and thousands of the poorer Israelites, who had no sacrifice to offer, were furnished with the means both of worship and of feasting—the means of adoring their God, and of making glad in the joy of their country.

The sacred side of the rite of sacrifice, apart from its secular uses, was unambiguous and intelligible—reverent acknowledgment of God, and return and self-surrender to Him. But was this the entire significance of so strange a rite? That is the question which deserves an extended and explicit reply. The fact must not be concealed, that long before the time of Moses, among the Gentile peoples around, as in heathen nations at this hour, a larger and very different conception was entertained. Urged by their fears, and judging by a human standard, and by human experiences, men early dreamed of propitiating divine favour, and appeasing divine anger, and of prevailing on the gods either to avert evil, or to bestow some desired benefit. To them Baal or Ammon or Moloch or Jupiter were monster exaggerations of human passions and vices; and hence,



in the worship of such deities, they shed blood in torrents, perpetrated horrible cruelties, cut themselves with knives and sacrificed their fellow-creatures, and even their own children, on the altar. Their idea was to make up, somehow, for the wrongs they had done, to glut and satiate the revenge, of which they supposed themselves to be the objects, or to work upon the stern and cruel nature of their gods, so as to secure some coveted favour. But it would require more than common evidence to sustain the belief that these pagan ideas in any degree tainted the divine economy of the Old Testament. It is not, indeed, impossible, or even improbable, that among the Jewish people something of the pagan element may have found its way. That element, as is shown in its early and wide development, must have much in it which is congenial with the ignorance and the gross ideas, and, especially, the fears of the human soul. Men are slow to believe that God's thoughts are immeasurably high above their thoughts, and His ways immeasurably high above their ways, slow to believe that His mercy reacheth to the clouds, and that He delighteth to pardon. But they do naturally, though most perversely, judge of the Most High by themselves, and by themselves even in their worst aspects—as furious, revengeful, and implacable. They do imagine that, like them-

selves, He also must hunger for satisfaction, must thirst for blood, must burn to wreak His vengeance.

It is possible—though any distinct evidence of such a thing is altogether wanting—that this pagan condition of thought and of heart may have more or less infected the Jewish people. But that it was ever sanctioned, or even indirectly countenanced, by their religious institutions, must be resolutely denied. When the Jew brought his sacrifice to the altar, two distinct ideas were presented to his mind. On the one hand, here was a merciful divine provision for his animal life; on the other hand, the God, who had made this provision, was here laying claim to the reverence and the love of his heart, and demanding his willing return and self-surrender. Every fresh offering was meant to be a fresh response to the divine claims, a new and sacred acknowledgment on his part, a new return and self-surrender to his God. The occasions of sacrifice were endless; but throughout them all, in every instance, the one meaning was simply this, renewed and reverent acknowledgment of God. He was taught that the grand reality, to be recognised in every change of circumstances, and with every passing hour, was God. The transparent purpose of the institution under which he lived was to encompass him with a holy reverence of God, to keep alive in him a constant sense of God's

presence and God's rights, and to convince him that he could be happy and safe and right only in God, in a cordial return and surrender to Him.

But the question is repeated, Was there no more than this involved in so extraordinary a rite? Are we not compelled to think that there must have been much more than this? How, for example, are we to account for the frequent mention of sacrificial blood in the Old Testament, and for the constant and reverent use which was made of it? The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews states the simple fact when he says that "almost all things were by the law purged with blood." "And that without shedding of blood is no remission." The sprinkling of blood was one of the most sacred of all the rites connected with sacrifice. It was performed always towards the mercy-seat, sometimes in the outer court, sometimes in the holy place, sometimes in both, and once a year in the holy of holies. Blood was sprinkled on the person, on the garments, and on the dwelling. The sacred vessels and furniture of the tabernacle were purified with blood. When the throat of the sacrifice was cut, the blood was caught in a vessel, and with his fingers the priest touched with blood the horns and sometimes the sides of the altar, the rest being poured out at the bottom of the altar, from which, through two openings, it was con-

ducted into the brook Kedron. On the great day of atonement, the high priest with unusual solemnity carried the blood of the sacrifice into the holy of holies, and sprinkled it reverently before the mercy-seat and on the mercy-seat.

A peculiar significance is added to all these facts, by the divine announcement in Lev. xvii. 10, 11. "Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls (lives); for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," (life.) Physiological and sanitary reasons were doubtless combined with others of a purely sacred kind, in this promulgation of the mind of God; but the sacred ground is emphatic and distinct: "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," (life.) Without determining at present the exact sense of the word "atonement," this much is evident, that whatever value, whatever acknowledgment of God there was in the sacrifice proper, was owing simply and wholly to the life-blood being shed. There was no sacrifice in the highest sense without this, and a strong confirmation is here

incidentally furnished of the interpretation which has been given of the sacrificial rite, in its primitive and natural meaning. We found that it was animal life in that rite, which was made a sacred thing by God, and it was the taking and offering up of the life, not the wounding or maiming of an animal, but the taking of the life, in which consisted the act of worship. The acknowledgment of God in the slaying of an animal was the acknowledgment of the Life-giver, and the act of worship was recognition of His rights and surrender back to Him of that which was supremely His, involving as it did a virtual self-surrender on the part of the offerer. The presentation and sprinkling of the blood were thus indispensable; and as the symbol of life taken, and of life surrendered, to the Life-giver, the blood had a meaning which did not belong to anything else, whilst, in itself merely, it was no more sacred than any other part of the sacrifice, and had no more efficacy or power. To set our minds completely at rest on this head, we have only to turn to another passage in the book of Leviticus, chap. vii. 23, 25—"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat. For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, even the soul that eateth it

shall be cut off from his people." The plain fact is this, in every proper sacrifice, two things were reserved sacred to God, the blood and the fat, but the one no more than the other—the blood being sprinkled and poured out, and the fat being consumed on the altar. The same solemn prohibition against eating applied to both alike, and the same penalty of death was attached to the violation of the prohibition, in the one case, and in the other alike. There were very strong sanitary reasons for such a law in that climate, and in the circumstances of the Israelites, but we have here simply to understand that the blood and the fat were God's portion in every sacrifice: all the rest, that is, all which was really wholesome, being used for food.

Among the causes which have operated in identifying the Jewish law with pagan worship one of the most powerful lies in that word "atonement." It is met with repeatedly, especially in the Pentateuch, creates, it is imagined, a most formidable difficulty, and involves thoroughly Pagan notions of the rite of sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> The original Hebrew term (*Kāphār*) affords no assistance to the inquirer. It simply means to cover, to conceal, to put aside. A

<sup>1</sup> I have sought to examine, with all the care possible to me, the whole of the passages of the Old Testament, in number between sixty and seventy, in which the word "atonement" occurs, and have given, in the succeeding pages, the result of this examination.

little help is gained from the Septuagint, the oldest translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, a translation by Jews of their native tongue into a foreign language, which, however, they were in the constant habit of using, and with which they were thoroughly familiar. Two or three different words are employed in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew, (Kāphār.) We have, in several instances, *ἀγιάζω*, I sanctify, consecrate, set apart; or, *καθαρίζω*, *καθαίρω*, I purify, cleanse, and their derivations; but in by far the greater number we find *ἰλάσκομαι*, or its compound, *ἐξιλάσκομαι*. There can be no question that, according to ordinary Greek usage, the two latter verbs convey distinctly the idea of propitiating or appeasing, and are constantly employed by Greek writers to express the supposed effect of sacrifices in averting the anger of the gods. But because the Septuagint translators applied a common, Pagan, sacrificial word to the Mosaic offerings, are we obliged to conclude that therefore they applied it, in the Pagan sense? It by no means necessarily follows; and there are strong reasons against such a conclusion. For example, *ἀγιάζω* and *καθαρίζω* are sometimes used indifferently, in the Septuagint, with *ἰλάσκομαι* and *ἐξιλάσκομαι*, as if they were convertible terms, though the two former certainly contain no such sense as expiation or propitiation. In the account

of the most solemn of all the Jewish festivals, the great day of atonement, given Exod. xxx. 10, we read, "Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it, ἐξιλάσεται ἔπ' αὐτο, (shall expiate upon it,) once a year with the blood of the sin offerings of atonement, τοῦ κάθαρισμοῦ, (of cleansing :) once in the year shall he make atonement upon it, κάθαρει, (cleanse upon it.)" Again, we read in Lev. xii. 20, "When he hath made an end of reconciling (atoning) the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar," &c. The Hebrew is *Kāphār*, and *ιλάσκομαι* is the verb used in the Septuagint. But whatever be the meaning of the Hebrew or of the Greek word elsewhere, in sacred or in profane writing, at least in this passage, atoning, as that word is understood in scholastic theology, propitiating, or appeasing, is utterly inadmissible. The holy place, the tabernacle, and the altar could commit no sin, and could awaken no divine anger which needed to be appeased. Nothing can be more clear than that the word "atone" cannot, in this instance, contain the idea of expiation.

It is worth while to note, in passing, that the text just quoted is not the only one in which our English translators have rendered the Hebrew *Kāphār* by "reconcile" instead of "atone." In at least five other instances, Lev. vi. 30 and viii. 15, Ezek. xlv.



15 and 18, and Dan. ix. 24, this rendering occurs. And it will be remembered that in the New Testament we found<sup>1</sup> that "reconcile" and "reconciliation," in twelve out of thirteen cases, are the translation of a Greek term which undeniably can have no reference to expiation, or satisfaction, in the scholastic sense. The impression is not unreasonable, that "reconcile" and "reconciliation" may possibly convey all that is essential in atone and atonement, as occurring in the Old Testament. A more extended examination of passages, as we judge, will strengthen this impression, and convert it into a conviction, based on no slender ground.

We read in Exod. xxix. 36-37, "Thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin-offering of atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it: . . . and it shall be an altar most holy; whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy." The altar was holy, not morally, but ceremonially; holy, in the sense of sacred; sanctified, in the sense of being consecrated; separated, set apart to the service of God. So sacred was it, that whatsoever touched it partook of its sanctity, and only sacred persons, specially separated to this end, durst touch it. But we are taught, that it became thus sacred, became a

<sup>1</sup> See chap. v., p. 129.

sanctified, hallowed, atoned thing, through sacrifice, —seven days of sacrifice; and the question is, How could this be? We have only to recollect, in answer to this question, that sacrifice was among the sacredest of human acts, the sacredest of all the outward forms of religious worship, and of all the outward modes of acknowledging the presence and the rights of God. In order to consecrate anything, to take it out of the circle of common things, and to set it apart for God, the directest method was to connect it with sacrifice. As for any idea of atonement for sin, as we speak, in the case of the altar, a piece of inanimate matter; as for any idea of expiation or propitiation or satisfaction to divine justice, it is simply and wholly unintelligible. Nor will it avail to suggest that the sins of the Israelites, whose offerings were laid upon the altar, rendered it unclean. Formally, ritually, it might be so, indeed it certainly was so, even as he who touched, or was touched, by anything ceremonially impure, was held to be ceremonially impure, (though he had contracted no real, moral defilement,) until by certain observances he was again formally cleansed. Accordingly, we are expressly told that the altar needed to be, and was, hallowed, atoned, once a year “from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.” But sin, real impurity, moral evil, could not insert itself into the wood or clay or stone of

which the altar was made, could not inhere or adhere to it, could not touch it, could not affect it in any conceivable way, or in the slightest degree. Atonement, in the sense of expiation of sin, for the altar, was impossible; the thing was either unmeaning or most impious. At the same time, it is easy to see that the very sacred and extended ceremonies by which the altar, and, in like manner, the sanctuary, and the tabernacle of the congregation were atoned, which in this place can signify only restored and reconciled to their holy uses, had an important meaning and an exalted purpose. In harmony with the entire spirit of a dispensation which was all addressed to the senses of an uncultivated people, an impression of profound awe was made on the Israelites. Their God was a holy and a jealous God, and would tolerate no oversight; His service was most sacred, and everything used in it must be held to be most sacred, and must be jealously kept perfectly free from spot or taint. But such atonement is not expiation.

A strong confirmation of this course of thought is found in Lev. xiv. 48-53. The passage refers to the plague of leprosy, in the walls of a house, which is most minutely described, by its various indications. The priest is, first of all, to make a careful inspection of the place, and to order certain steps to be taken by the inmates. These attended to, "if the priest shall

come in, and look upon it, and, behold, the plague hath not spread in the house: then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed. And he shall take to cleanse the house, two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop: and he shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water: and he shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times: and he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood, and with the hyssop, and with the scarlet: and he shall let go the living bird out of the city into the open fields, and make an atonement for the house: and it shall be clean." The meaning of the word "atonement" is the subject of our inquiry. It is no presumption to assert, with entire confidence, that here that meaning cannot, on any possible ground, contain the idea of expiation, propitiation, satisfaction to divine justice. And for a reason which is altogether invincible, the walls of the house had committed no sin, and were incapable of moral impurity. But wherefore, then, is it asked such ceremonies as are described in detail? Simply because such a house was an offence among a people, who, in a sense different from all others on

the face of the earth, had been separated to God, and who, not in their religious rites only, but in their dwellings, their garments, their food, and everything belonging to them, were to keep themselves with jealous care from all that was noxious or unclean.

Lev. xiv. 1-20, contains the law relating to a man afflicted with the disease of leprosy—no sin, but a merely physical calamity. When the disease was cured, he had an atonement made for him by sacrifice. After other details of observances, we read, in verses 19, 20, “the priest shall offer the sin-offering, and make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness; and afterwards he shall kill the burnt-offering: and the priest shall offer the burnt-offering and the meat offering upon the altar: and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and he shall be clean,”—that is, he shall be reinstated again in his place among the holy people as one of them, one consecrated and separated to God like the rest, reconciled and restored to his position and his privileges. To the same effect, the man who had a running issue in his flesh, when the disease was cured, was atoned by sacrifice. “The priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord for his issue.”<sup>1</sup> A mother after child-birth, and a woman during her separation, were ceremonially unclean, and were

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xv. 15.

atoned by sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> Bodily uncleannesses of many different kinds are minutely described in the books of Moses; sins of ignorance also, which were not moral offences at all, are set down, and were all atoned by sacrifice. To such minuteness did the law descend, that if a Jew but touched any unclean thing, such as the carcass of an unclean beast, the priest must make atonement for him by sacrifice.<sup>2</sup>

It would be idle to argue that in all these and similar passages—very numerous as they are, and comprising a large proportion of all the instances in which the term under discussion occurs—there can be no possible reference to expiation, as that word is now understood. Where no sin had been committed, atonement for sin, in the scholastic sense, was impossible. But the word is used, and this proves, if anything can prove, that the word does not necessarily involve this idea. The various ordinances, all the while, show on their surface their own significant interpretation. The Israelites were a consecrated, a separated people. God acknowledged them as His, and admitted them to His worship; but they must be taught in the only effectual way in which such a people could be taught, that it was no light thing to draw near to Him. They must be taught that no negligence, and not the slightest defect, could escape

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xii. 7, and xv. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. v. 6.

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His eye for a moment, and that the least defilement affecting their persons, their dress, their food, their houses, or anything connected with them, would unfit them for His service, and exclude them for the time from His house and His worship. But so soon as the outward cause of exclusion was removed, their God was ready to welcome them again, and it was their part to return to Him, and in a way prescribed by Himself, to reconcile and restore themselves to His service. Sacrifice was thus the significant expression of their desire to acknowledge and return to God, the outward symbol of their restoration to His house and their re-union with His people. The rite did nothing to God, appeased no anger, expiated no sin, but it spoke much, and was meant to speak much, for the offerers. It testified their humble acknowledgment and their reverent surrender to God ; but that was all.

## SECTION SECOND—ITS TRUE MEANING AND INTERPRETATION.

Visible Punishments and Rewards in Old Testament—Atonement for Life, not Soul—System of Discipline and of Worship—Not Scheme of Salvation—Training of Israelites—Old Testament, Record of Spiritual Truth—Special Privileges—Salvation always Common to World—Sacrifices never Ground of Pardon—“Purifying of Flesh”—No More—Anticipation of Death of Christ Impossible—“I, even I, am He that Blotteth out,” &c.

IT is very needful to pause here for a moment, and to reflect on the weighty conclusion which we have reached. Some of the wisest and best of men have accepted the doctrine of Atonement—meaning expiation and satisfaction to justice—because the terms of Scripture, as they judged, expressly contained it. Undoubtedly the Pagan sacrifices, by those who offered them, were held to be expiatory. As undoubtedly the very terms, such as *ἱλάσκομαι* and *ἱλάσμος*, which ordinary Greek writers constantly employed to express the expiatory character of their sacrificial rites, are applied by the Septuagint writers of the Old Testament, and by the inspired writers of



the New Testament, to the Mosaic sacrifices, or to the death of Christ on the cross. But notwithstanding this, it has been distinctly proved, by several decisive examples, (and the fact will be confirmed presently by additional proofs,) that the Hebrew *Kāphār*, the Greek *ἱλάσκειν*, and the English atone, do not, and cannot, in the cases cited, involve the idea of expiation. The sacred writers employ the common, Pagan, sacrificial term—it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for them to have done anything else; but they distinctly do not employ it to express the Pagan idea, but one essentially and totally different from it. The use of *Kāphār*, *ἱλάσκειν*, and *ἱλάσμος*, is not proof of the doctrine of expiation and satisfaction; is immeasurably far from this.

There is another consideration which must be taken into account in interpreting the Mosaic system. That system was distinctively one of visible punishments and rewards. Bodily health and outward prosperity were promised to obedience; outward calamity and death were threatened to disobedience. It is startling, how often, as the penalty of mere ceremonial offences, we read “that soul shall be cut off from his people.” It will be remembered that among the passages a little while ago referred to, we found that the eating of blood or of fat was punishable with death. In like manner it is recorded that the man who was

found gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day was put to death. And for all presumptuous sins—that is, deliberate, conscious violation or neglect of ceremonial ordinances—the punishment was death. This fact will readily explain to us a phraseology not infrequent in the Old Testament, which by itself would be hopelessly perplexing. The sacrifices are repeatedly said to be an atonement for the soul. The people are commanded to sacrifice, that they may make an atonement for their souls. But the Hebrew word for soul means, not always, or even often, what we distinguish as soul, but simply life. In most, perhaps all, of the passages where the word is found, the true rendering would be life, not soul, in the present accepted sense. It was literally true, under the Mosaic dispensation, that the health and life—the soul—of the people depended on their faithful observance of the outward rites of their religion. They were bound even, for health's sake and for life's sake, to worship the Life-giver, and to do so exactly in the prescribed form—to express their acknowledgment and their felt dependence, and formally yield themselves up to Him.

A passage in illustration may be here quoted,<sup>1</sup> containing an ordinance which dates from the very commencement of the dispensation, and the teaching of

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxx. 11-16.

which is very unambiguous. It relates to the numbering of the people at stated times. "They shall give every man a ransom for his soul (his life) unto the Lord, when thou numberest them." Half a shekel was the sum to be given by rich and poor alike, neither more nor less, "an offering unto the Lord." It is added, "to make an atonement for your souls (lives.) And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls" (lives.) In this passage that efficacy which is conceived to belong exclusively to bloody sacrifices, is connected with a payment in money. Unquestionably there was no expiatory, propitiatory offering here, no satisfaction to divine justice, as we speak; but there was, it is explicitly declared, a real atonement; showing, if language has a meaning, that the word "atonement" in the Old Testament cannot in this instance signify what we have supposed it must always signify, but must mean, simply, reverent acknowledgment of God—an expression of submission, of self-surrender, and of cordial reconciliation to Him.

A passage very similar to the last, and as decisive in its teaching, will be found in Num. xxxi. 50-54.

There had been war with Midian, immense spoil had been taken, and not one of the Israelitish warriors had fallen. At the command of God, a certain portion of the spoil was given to the Levites, and for the service of the tabernacle. But we read that the officers of the army came near to Moses and said, "We have brought an oblation for the Lord, what every man hath gotten of jewels, of gold, chains and bracelets, rings and ear-rings, and tablets, to make an *atonement* (obviously meaning grateful acknowledgment) for our souls (lives) before the Lord." This passage may be left to speak for itself.

The examination, somewhat extended, which we have sought to conduct, brings us to the fixed conclusion, so far as we have yet gone, that atonement in the sense of expiation for sin, has no place whatever in the Mosaic ordinances. The sin to which alone these ordinances refer throughout, is wholly ceremonial, ritual, not moral, that is, not real sin at all. And not only so, for it has been proved very distinctly, that the sacrifices even for ceremonial offences were in no sense meant to be expiatory, but were simply the ordained and significant mode in which the people expressed their desire to reconcile and restore themselves to God. Additional and striking evidence of this fact is still to be adduced. In the meantime, we turn to a passage which inci-

dentally and from the negative side, supplies singular evidence. When Moses was in the mount with God receiving the tables of the law, the Israelites, wearied out with his long absence, and still retaining much of the spirit of Egyptian idolatry, formed a molten calf, and bowed down before it, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel." The crime was punished awfully; a vast multitude of the idolaters, to the number of about three thousand, fell by the sword of the Levites. After the infliction of this terrible punishment, Moses gathered the congregation together on the morrow and said to them, for they were all implicated in the crime, "Ye have sinned a great sin,"—no mere ceremonial offence, but a real, moral transgression, a transgression heinous and aggravated above measure, against the nature and the law and the honour of Jehovah—"Ye have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord, peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin."<sup>1</sup>

Let us well mark and ponder how the man of God conducted this perilous case. Of course, we should naturally have anticipated that the very first thing to which his convictions and his hopes as a Jew must have impelled him, would be sacrifice. If, according to modern conceptions, sacrifice was the appointed method of expiating sin and propitiating the favour

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxii. 30.

of God, now, of all others, was the very moment for proving the efficacy of the rite. Moses certainly understood the doctrines and the laws of Judaism, and had an undoubted faith in them; but strange to say, he offers no sacrifice. Indisputably, he did not believe in the expiation of real sin by sacrifice; indisputably, he did not believe that God would be propitiated by blood, else he would certainly have offered up a victim. Instead of all this, in the face of all this, he adopts the old, the primitive, the unchanging, the only and ever availing method, that of simple, humble confession and prayer. The people had awfully separated themselves from their God; they must be brought back, reconciled, atoned to Him. Moses in their name throws himself at the feet of God, in their name confesses the sin and its greatness, and in their name begs forgiveness from the pure, free grace of the divine bosom. And it was granted. The revelation of the forgiving mercy of the holy God, in which Moses trusted thousands of years ago, and on which he cast a guilty nation, dates from the first moment of sin. This was the true and the only ground of faith to all the good, from the creation, on through succeeding ages, till the advent of Christ. In the reconciling, redeeming love of the Incarnate One, we now have evidences and influences, such as

earlier generations never knew, but substantially and virtually the ground of faith is, and has been ever the same—the revealed, forgiving mercy of the holy God. The Jewish economy did not touch this common heritage of man at all, except that it expressly contained and exhibited it. This was not Jewish, but human, the hope of man, wherever there was a soul that struggled after God and besought His mercy.

But without undervaluing in the least this important fact, most precious to man and to all ages, it is not to be forgotten that the Great Father, who pities and loves all souls, had high and special purposes to accomplish through the agency of the descendants of Abraham. The Incarnate Redeemer of men, as concerning the flesh, was to spring from this race, and a line of dim prophetic twilight was to be coincident with the course of Jewish history, till it merged and melted in the dawn of Bethlehem, in the mysterious glories of Calvary, and in the sunshine of the Christian revelation. God had more to accomplish for the world through their means than through means of other nations, and therefore spoke to them and through them, as He could not speak in the case of others. Simply because of the merciful, universal purpose, which in the vast complications of providence was to be served by them,

the Jews were in certain respects nearer to the fountain of truth than others; but they were not therefore and never were more beloved than others.

It is impossible to interpret the profound historic interest which to this hour attaches to the Jewish nation, except on the ground of a special and grand destiny in the purposes of Almighty providence. Four thousand years ago the Jews were a nation, and they constitute a distinctly recognised nation at this day, though without a country and without political organisation. For two thousand years they have been dispersed over all quarters of the globe, Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, amongst all nations, Pagan, Mohammedan, and Christian, Roman Catholic and Protestant, and have many times been pursued with most merciless hostility. But they have not yet perished, not melted away, have not been swallowed up by surrounding and aggressive populations, not been slowly fused down and rendered indistinguishable from the masses on every side. After four thousand years of existence and two thousand years of dispersion and persecution, they remain a distinct, recognised people, having preserved their language, their laws, their worship, and even their physiognomy, to this day. What does, what can it mean? The fact is perfectly alone in all history. Not another such example, nor anything



approaching to it, can be pointed out in the entire annals of the world. It is not the sacred books of the Jews, nor even their religion, to which we need to appeal. Their very existence, were there nothing else, is a standing proof of a marvellous purpose of Providence, somehow connected with their preservation and isolation.

The key to the interpretation of all the peculiarities of ancient Judaism, lies here, as we venture to judge. An ignorant and barbarous people were to be disciplined for a lofty and godlike mission, of the real nature of which, its mystery, its vastness, its grandeur, they were to the last almost as unaware as others. By means of a stringent and all embracing form of worship, which affected every hour of the day, and every element and aspect of their life, they were brought into peculiar and constant relation with the one true Jehovah, and taught to believe and feel that they were His people. By a succession of never-ending sacred rites, every one of which, even at the peril of their lives, they had to observe scrupulously, to the veriest jot and tittle, they were not only habituated to the thought of God but inspired with profound awe of Him, and educated in the conviction of His constant presence, His unerring observation, and the perpetual reverence which He demanded. From age to age, heroic souls were born among them

to govern, deliver, rebuke, or punish them, and to reform their institutions and their manners. Gifted sages were raised up to inspire them with exalted and pure conceptions of Jehovah. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and historians, and psalmists, and prophets, and seers, uttered their divine messages through the length and breadth of the land. To the Jews, as to no other people under heaven, were committed the oracles of God. Without philosophy, without science, without literature, except of a sacred kind, the writings of their inspired men contain for the world, the largest amount anywhere to be found, of what the world to this day acknowledges to be best and truest in divine religion. Objections, some of them of great weight, and all of them meriting impartial examination, have often been taken to individual portions of the Old Testament, to some of its facts, its moral precepts, its doctrines, its spirit. But it is seldom understood, that were the whole of the portions objected to taken out, the Old Testament would be diminished to no considerable extent, and it would still be a repository of essential and highest truth for man, a tithe of which all the sacred books in the world besides put together could not supply.

During the present century, and increasingly as the century has advanced, enlightened research has

been laboriously directed to the Vedas, and Puranas, and Shasters of India, and to the Avesta and Zend-Avesta of Persia.<sup>1</sup> Thank God, for divine passages in these ancient writings ! Thank God, for many beautiful, and pure, and true sayings ! But impartial scholars will not dispute that these are few and short, and are found in the midst of a mass of what can be called by no fitter name than Pagan rubbish. Scarcely have we been touched by some sentence of elevated and holy thought, than we are dragged down to coarse, gross polytheism, to stupid, childish, legendary tales, or to what is as corrupt as it is puerile ; and these form the staple and the substance of the sacred books. The Jewish Scriptures, on the other hand, are not only more simple and more clear, but their teaching is persistent and uniform. With a constant voice they proclaim, sometimes in simple terms, but often in language of surpassing magnificence and sublimity, the eternity, the omnipresence, the omniscience, the spirituality, the holiness, and the wisdom, of the one true Jehovah. And, above all, in passages without number, and in forms the most

<sup>1</sup> Altogether unacquainted with the Sanscrit and Persian languages, I have no knowledge of the sacred books of the East, beyond what may be gathered from such portions of them as have appeared in an English dress. But these have not been inconsiderable, and may be supposed to convey a tolerably faithful impression of the general character of the writings.

tender and the most touching, they consistently proclaim the forgiving mercy of the holy God.

But this last, it is needful to recollect, was not specially a Jewish revelation, but was common to the whole world from the beginning, and remained with the world, so far as the world chose to retain and preserve it faithfully. Ever and everywhere, there was a loving Spirit of God, striving with man, as in the long ages before the flood. The blessed God never abandoned the souls He had made, darkened and sinful though they were. The blessed God never limited His influences or even His light to one little spot of earth, though for obvious reasons the light which fell there was more abundant and more clear than could shine elsewhere. To Jews and Gentiles in common, to the whole world, the primitive, universal ground of faith in the mercy of a holy God had been revealed from the first. And we shall certainly misconceive the economy of Moses, if we suppose for a moment that it was intended to supersede the primitive revelation of mercy, and to reveal a new and peculiar method, for the forgiveness of sins. One thing is plain ; if this had been the case, few except Jews could ever have known it, and the whole world besides would simply have been left to perish. But on the ground of all that has been advanced in this section, we maintain that that

economy was only and wholly a system of discipline and of worship—a system wisely adapted to the condition and to the special and select destinies of the Israelitish people. Nowhere and never by God's authority was forgiveness of real sins connected with ritual observances of any kind, and above all, never was it connected with the taking of animal life.

The example of Moses on the mount, pleading for Israel, when they had sinned a great sin, teaches, without the possibility of mistake, that forgiveness of sins was to be obtained, not at all by offering sacrifice, but wholly and solely as the pure, free gift of God's grace. If anything were wanting to fortify this conclusion, it is abundantly supplied by the unequivocal judgment which is pronounced by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 4. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." The sin, therefore, to which alone the ancient sacrifices referred and which they are said to cover, (Kāphār,) was ceremonial, not moral. And this is actually declared in so many words by the same inspired writer in another passage of the same Epistle. He is proving the superior efficacy of the blood of Christ, "how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your consciences," &c. And the ground on which he thus argues is this, "if the blood of bulls and of goats,

and the ashes of an heifer, sanctify to the purifying of the flesh," &c. He admits that these had a certain effect, according to the appointment of God, but it was merely an outward effect, they could not take away real sin, not at all; if they sanctified, that is, set apart, separated, distinguished, it was only externally, the effect reached no farther than the outer relations, and the social and ecclesiastical standing. That was literally all, in the judgment of an inspired apostle when announcing formally the meaning and the highest efficacy of the ancient economy. It was not, according to this authority, a scheme of forgiveness, a plan for the salvation of the soul. It was simply a system of worship and of discipline. It reached to "the purifying of the flesh," but nothing more.

We come to this: the Israelites, for high and special reasons, were brought into relation with the living God, and admitted to His temple and His worship. But a thousand causes, every day some outward defilement, some neglect, or some violation of ceremonial rites and forms, of which they might even be unaware, might interrupt the relation and render them unworthy. They needed, and were taught that they needed, perpetual cleansing from personal, outward unworthiness, needed to renew their acknowledgments, their submission, their sur-

render to God, as a peculiar and separate people, and to reconcile and restore themselves to His service, by the means which He had ordained. Hence, and only hence, originated not only the daily and more ordinary re-consecrations by sacrifice, but also the grand, solemn, annual purgation from all the ritual delinquencies of a lengthened period ; hence the new beginning of the ceremonial year, and their reinstatement in all the privileges and rights of a holy and chosen people. Under the guidance of the inspired apostle, whose decisive words have been quoted, we look back on the entire Jewish economy, on the tabernacle and the temple, on the burnt-offerings and the sin-offerings, and the trespass-offerings, and the peace-offerings, and the wave-offerings, and the meat-offerings, and the drink-offerings on the daily morning and evening sacrifices, the special services for Sabbath days and for new moons, on the three great festivals, and especially on the most solemn of them all, the feast of atonement, and we learn without misgiving, that these all sanctified only to the purifying of the flesh, but nothing more. They did not touch real sin, and they were never intended to touch real sin. Ceremonial reconciliation to God, outward restoration to His worship, they could and did secure, but real forgiveness, forgiveness of real sin, then, as now and always, was dispensed only to

humble, simple faith in the pure, free mercy of the holy God.

Religion in the human soul,—veneration of the living God, trust in His holy mercy and love of Him, of what He is and of what He loves—must be essentially the same everywhere, and for all ages. The outward modes of expressing this inward condition, like the many tongues of men, the visible symbols of it, that is to say, the forms and rites of religious service, may vary endlessly, but the invisible real constituents of religion are unalterable. Genuine piety and goodness in a Jew thirty centuries ago, and in a Christian at this hour, cannot differ in any really essential element. It is a patent fact, that the Jewish psalms chanted three thousand years ago in the temple of Jerusalem, speak now, to myriads of human hearts in Europe, Asia, America, and Africa, with a subduing power which is irresistible, and are as fresh and as true to the mental states of the good, to their sins, their conflicts, their doubts, their fears, their depressions, their joys, their faith and their hope, as if they had been written yesterday. Christians can find no fitter or happier words in which to utter their holiest feelings and their profoundest experiences, than those of the old shepherd-king of Israel—and why? Because religion in the soul is and must be the same for all times and for all lands.



The extraordinary attention which has been bestowed on the mere ritual of Judaism has proved most misleading, and a morbid fancy has busied itself in detecting latent spiritual meanings in it, which it certainly never contained. It was ordained in the divine wisdom and goodness, and we cannot doubt that it was found a help to piety and a fitting medium for that age and people, through which the emotions of the soul might be uttered forth. But pious emotions and experiences, though capable of being expressed in many different modes, are apart from them all, and have another and a far deeper origin than any outward ritual. All that was real in the soul of the old Jew had its root, just as at this hour, in holy truth, perceived and loved and chosen by his will, and in the agency of that Divine Spirit, who works independently of tabernacle or temple or altar. We have so reasoned respecting the symbols and forms of Jewish worship, as if they were essential to salvation, and as if they constituted to the Israelites the very method of their spiritual acceptance with God. But it must be an entire mistake. Exact obedience to the Mosaic law was indispensable on many grounds. It was certainly indispensable to their national salvation, and was the one condition on which they retained their peculiar relation to God, and their position and their privileges as a separated

people ; but it did not, and could not, in the least determine the presence within them or the absence of real religious life. An Israelite might observe in the exactest form all the sacrifices and services of the temple, and be entitled to be held, in this regard, perfectly faultless and sinless, who was nevertheless really impenitent and ungodly. Then, as now, what a human soul really was depended entirely on the inward convictions and principles and reigning spirit, and was determined not at all by what was specially Jewish, but by what was generic and human, or rather diviné. An Israelite long ago struggling after God, oppressed with the consciousness of inward evil, and longing to throw off the burden and return to the Father against whom he had sinned, was in nothing essentially different from true penitents at this day, and had no refuge but the old, the primitive, the universal revelation given to the whole world in common—the forgiving mercy of the holy God. Trusting simply in this, he was at peace, reconciled and restored, pardoned and saved, not on the ground of any sacrifice or expiation, but in the mere, pure, free mercy of the Most High.

But take the opposite alternative. Let it be supposed that a Jew had adopted what indeed was the universal Pagan notion, that of appeasing divine anger, and propitiating divine favour. Let it be

supposed that, having offered sacrifice according to the law, he looked, on this ground, for forgiveness from God for his real sin. What then? In this case it must be maintained, not as a mere matter of individual opinion, but on the clear authority of the New Testament, that he trusted in an unmitigated untruth. "It is not possible" — it never was or could be possible — "that the blood of bulls or of goats should take away sins." On this subject, very strong and gross language is ventured by good men, even up to the present day. Kurtz, on the sacrificial language of the Old Testament, thus writes:—"The soul of the sacrificed animal made expiation for the sinful soul sacrificing, and procured the forgiveness of sins." Again, "The sinless soul of the animal was the medium of expiation to the sinful and guilty soul of the man." Again, "The laying on of hands was the transfer of sin and guilt from the man to the beast."<sup>1</sup> We meet all such statements with a short but invincible reply. Unless the apostle Paul be at fault in his reasoning, they must be altogether untrue. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." And if this ever was and is impossible, shall we on any ground imagine that God nevertheless intended the Jews to believe it? Did He, by any utterance or arrange-

<sup>1</sup> Clark, Edinburgh, pp. 75, 80, and 86.

ment of His, create this delusion? or did He tacitly allow it, or countenance or favour it in any way? It cannot be; the suspicion is blasphemy.

It is argued that the great sacrifice to be offered by the Messiah in the end of the ages, and not the actual animal sacrifices, which, on the contrary, were simply prefigurative and typical, was that alone on which the faith of the pious Israelite rested for salvation. But if evidence of the existence of this anticipative, substitutionary faith be required, it cannot be produced. There was a universal and confident hope in Judea of a coming Messiah; but the notion of a sacrifice to be endured by the Messiah, if it was ever entertained, has at least never found expression in the Old Testament, and exists only in the devout imagination of Christians. That the ancient Jews could form no possible preconception of the life and death of Jesus Christ seems indisputable. To say nothing of incarnation, and supposing them able to preconceive a God in human form, could they by any possibility imagine this Incarnate Deity humbled before His creatures, despised, rejected, publicly condemned, and at last ignominiously cut off and cast away from the face of the earth? Is it forgotten that these very things, when they occurred, caused all but the entire Jewish nation to reject the Christ of God when he actually appeared? Is it forgotten that

these are the very things which for two thousand years have kept, as they continue to keep, the entire Jewish nation at an almost hopeless distance from the Messiah? And can it be believed that these things so incredible and so hateful when they were realised — that these, or anything like these, could be preconceived centuries before they happened, and preconceived through the aid of bleeding victims on the altar; and not only thus preconceived, but welcomed, so as to be the ground of an intelligent and happy faith? It seems the merest impossibility, and it is destitute of the slightest evidence.

There is not a single instance, so far as we are aware, in which any Old Testament writer represents the legal sacrifices as types or prefigurations of a nobler sacrifice to be offered up, once for all, in the future ages. And not only so, there is not a single instance, so far as we are aware, in which it is indicated that the legal sacrifices, whether as present or as anticipative and prefigurative acts, were the ground of the pardon of real sin; there is not a single passage of the Old Testament in which, either by God or man, the offering of sacrifice is connected with the salvation of the soul. It ought to be pondered with profound seriousness by all, that the Jehovah of the Bible never declares, “lay your sacrifices on mine altar, and your souls shall be saved,” and that no Old

Testament saint is ever heard using the plea with his God, "pardon mine iniquity, for I have offered up all the appointed sacrifices." It is altogether and uniformly the reverse.

David the king fell before a shameful and horrible temptation, and committed a double and atrocious crime. Did he hasten to the altar to make expiation and atonement? No. "Thou desirest not sacrifice," he says, "else would I give it." This was no case for sacrifice, it was real, not ritual transgression, and sacrifice of another kind, true, inward, spiritual self-sacrifice alone could avail here. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." David finds refuge in the primitive, divine sanctuary—free, forgiving mercy—and betakes himself to the old, only way of humble confession and prayer. "Have mercy upon me, O God," he cried—because I have offered the appointed sacrifices? no—"according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."<sup>1</sup>

At the dedication of the temple, after innume-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. li. 1, 2, 10, 16, 17.

rable sacrifices had been offered up, Solomon consecrated the house of God by prayer, and here are some of the sentences of the memorable invocation. "When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and" — offer sacrifice and expiation? no — "pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house: then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel." "What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive," &c. &c. "If they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, saying, we have sinned, and done perversely, we have committed wickedness: and so return unto thee with all their hearts, and pray unto thee towards the land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and this house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause," &c.<sup>1</sup> There is not a single hint here of sacrifice as the medium of pardon and reconcilia-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings viii. 33, 34, 38, 39, 47-49.

tion. The one method is confession, prayer, and trust in the primitive revelation of free, forgiving mercy.

But strange to say, even the Old Testament contains very direct and unambiguous teachings on this subject, and to the same effect. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."<sup>1</sup> "I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offering."<sup>2</sup> "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" The patent design of these questions is to expose the perfect worthlessness of all sacrifices, however costly, as a means of putting away sin. But the answer to the questions is more significant and decisive still,—“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee”—sacrifices? thousands of the costliest offerings? No—“but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”<sup>3</sup> If this be legalism,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xv. 22.<sup>2</sup> Hosea vi. 5.<sup>3</sup> Micah vi. 7, 8.



as has been often said—if this be salvation, not by faith but by works, at the least it does not belong only to the Old Testament. The same thing, virtually, only in a more thoroughly legal dress, is found in the New Testament. “Pure religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”<sup>1</sup> The eye of God discerns the spirit which is in a man, and which alone determines what he is. Sacrifices, ritual conformity, outward acts of worship, have their meaning, without doubt, but the inner, reigning law of a man’s soul and life is the supreme, the sole test. We ask, with the old prophet, is he reverent and lowly before God? is he upright and true? is he merciful as his Father in heaven is merciful? We ask, with the apostle James, is he pure in heart? is he self-denying and devoted to the good of others?

The sacrifices under the law of Moses were of importance on many obvious accounts, and they were imperatively binding,—for the highest of all reasons, the command of God. But they had no spiritual worth, except arising from the principles and the state of the heart; and in the matter of the forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to God, they had no worth or power at all. The Being

<sup>1</sup> James i. 27.

who in His wisdom ordained them, denounces them, however outwardly and ritually faultless, when the inward state of those who offered them was vicious or godless. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow."<sup>1</sup> To what do all these marvellous words evidently point? There is something immeasurably more important than sacrifices, however ceremonially perfect; and that something is the state of the heart,—the in-

<sup>1</sup> Isa. i. 11-17.

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ward principles and laws of the soul. But what becomes of such sinners as God in this strong passage rebukes and condemns? Having denounced their wickedness and declared His demands, does He forthwith leave them to themselves? Or is He prepared still to deal with them, and if so, on what ground? If sacrifice had been His own appointed medium of expiation and salvation, God must have directed them, though in a totally new spirit, to offer sacrifice. But not a word is uttered respecting that rite, as if it had anything to do with pardon. Instead of this, here is the divine method following at once, without a break, the exposure and denunciation of sin.—“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”<sup>1</sup> It is Heaven’s simple, glorious, unencumbered plan,—forgiveness, the pure, free gift of God’s grace. “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions,”—on the ground of sacrifice, of adequate atonement and satisfaction? no,—“for *mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isa. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xliii. 25.



## CHAPTER IX.

### SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

Voluntary—"I lay down My Life"—Issue Foreseen and encountered Willingly—Escape without Dishonour, Impossible—Men, Sole Agents in Crucifixion—Determinate Fore-knowledge of God—Natural Course of Events—Wholly, A Human Crime—No Sacrifice by Men to God—No Divine, Judicial Arrangement—Two Gods—Tri-unity Destroyed—Substitution, its Meaning—Figure, not Reality—Mere Human Notions, transferred to Mind of God—Natural Sense of Scripture—Fictions taken for Facts—Perfect Love, in Death of Christ—Human Self-sacrifice—Noble and Ennobling—Ray from Heaven—Eternal Fountain of Pure Generosity—God's Sacrifice for Men—Conquers Soul.



A PHYSICAL miracle, amidst the wilds of Sinai, is supposed to prefigure the spiritual mystery which long afterwards was unveiled outside the gate of Jerusalem. The bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed, is held to be a symbol of the awful death of Jesus of Nazareth. And it needs no extravagant fancy, but only reverent and calm thought, to perceive points of analogy between the two facts. On a holier mountain than Horeb, a greater spectacle than the burning bush is set before the eyes of men, "Behold the Lamb of God, who is taking away the sins of the world!" It is simply true, besides, as of old, that only in the far-off desert, with the awful stillness around, and the vast skies overhead, only in the deep solitude and silence of the soul, in moments of intense, lowly, and rapt spiritual vision, we can gaze on this transcendent spectacle, so as to reach even the outermost fringe of its mysterious significance. There is here an unearthly struggle between darkness and light, the light lurid and terrible from the darkness which envelopes and

threatens to quench it, the darkness ever more visible from the flashing light which darts across it. A dread conflict is waging, a conflict of life with death, death trampling down and crushing out the vital flame, life flickering, and sinking, and seeming to expire, but enkindling again and glowing anew, and flaming up into a blaze of triumph, in which death itself, at last, shall be consumed. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Not man but God is here, amidst the struggle and conflict, God *in* man, God teaching the world by a stupendous example, and Himself making a mysterious sacrifice for His erring children. It is proclaimed from the cross to the wide universe, that there is life in death, gain in loss, dignity in self-abasement, blessedness in suffering, and glory in shame. It is taught, as nowhere else and never before or since was possible, that the vilest and worst of deaths may be sublimed by the soul of the dying, which death cannot touch, and that a love which sacrifices itself for others and gives up all to God, is the last crown of spiritual excellence.

Jesus Christ our Lord was sacrificed—that at least is not questioned, and cannot be questioned; his life



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was violently and cruelly taken away. It is admitted, besides, by all who bear his name, that he was sacrificed for the sake of men, and in order to secure the highest good of the human race. We change only the form, not the reality of this idea, when we say that he was sacrificed for sin, on account of sin, to put away sin ; because sin ever was and is the prime obstruction to the well-being of the world. Had there been no sin, men had needed no redemption. So that in the strictest sense, Jesus died wholly on account of sin, and in order that this radical curse might be utterly and for ever extirpated.

Whatever more than this be true, there is, at least, this one thing additional perfectly certain, if the historic records be accepted ; that Jesus, of himself, voluntarily and freely sacrificed his own life. "I lay down my life for the sheep. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again." It would be wholly false to think that anything was ever done by the holy Saviour to tempt or provoke, or in any way influence men to compass his death. On the contrary, all that he did was calculated to render this issue impossible. But he must pursue his course of truth, and purity, and love, in spite of

everything. It was a necessity—the highest moral necessity—in him to be faithful to himself, to God, and to man, without regard to consequences, or to the prejudices, the wishes, or the judgments, of people, or rulers, or priests. Being what he was, Christ's death, in that age and nation, was inevitable, and he knew that it was. The issue was not an accident—not an unforeseen and unhappy upshot of circumstances, to which, in spite of himself, he was forced to surrender. On the contrary, it was distinctly contemplated from the first—as distinctly contemplated as any part of his self-determined course. But if, owing to the ignorance and the false views and the wicked passions of men, this issue was inevitable, he was resolved that it should not move him for an instant from his integrity and fidelity. With his eyes open, of his own free will and purpose, he encountered the agony, the terror, and the shame of crucifixion. “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.”

It was indispensable to the success of the mission of divine love that the Incarnate should accept all hazards, be they what they might. Had he once yielded to fear, or to the instinct of self-preservation, or to the sense of shame, or to disappointed hope, or to disgust and anger at the baseness of men,—had he,

on any ground, stopped short, and only retired from a course which seemed to be fruitless, this had been a confession of defeat, and a palpable distrust of God, the living energy of reconciling, redeeming power had been lost, and divine love had been shorn of its last overwhelming expression. But if death could not be escaped without dishonour, the Infinitely Mighty and Wise determined to convert even death into life—to extract the noblest good out of essential evil, and to make the very wrath of men to praise Him. Leaving the perverse human will to take its way, He who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working was able to defeat His creatures by their very success, and to convert their crime and their curse into a blessing, wide as the world, and lasting as eternity. Hence said the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, “Him being delivered”—given up, surrendered—“in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain.” His betrayal and capture and murder, like all the guilty outbreaks of the human will, however opposed to truth, and right, and God, were not left out in the vast system of providence, but distinctly reckoned and provided against, as wisdom and love should ordain. Hence wrote the prophet long before Messiah’s advent, “It pleased the Lord to bruise (crush) him; He hath put him to

grief." That which comes out in God's providence is often in Scripture so put as if it were the direct doing of God, though most manifestly it neither is nor can be. "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," it is said, when all that God did had a manifest tendency to subdue and reclaim rather than to harden. But because the actual effect was to render the King of Egypt only more obdurate than before, that effect is ascribed, though it can be so only in the most secondary and indirect sense, to the divine agency. Most certainly God did not crush the Messiah, or put him to grief. Most certainly the fact of his being crushed and grieved in itself was abhorrent, not pleasing, to God. But, forasmuch as the love which bore the agonies and the shame of crucifixion was evinced to be unconquerable, and was eventually to effect the redemption of a lost world, these agonies and that shame became, and truly were, an infinite, divine satisfaction.

Jesus died ! in harmony with the thought and the will of the Father, he died ; and since fidelity to his divine mission demanded that he should brave all consequences, he freely offered himself up a sacrifice to God, in that cause which was God's no less than man's. Even the outward surrender was noble, the noblest which it is possible for humanity to yield. It was a beautiful sacrifice which was cheerfully laid

upon the altar of God, a young, fresh, human life, full of active goodness, wise and meek and patient,—a pure, spotless, loving, tender life. And this was but the symbol of a higher sacrifice still, for Jesus offered up his soul to God. “I and my Father are one,” is his own marvellous testimony. At the least it must mean, at one, perfectly at one. The soul of Jesus ever moved in unbroken, filial harmony with the mind of God. Divine thoughts, divine purposes, divine sympathies, divine love of man, the divine idea of redeeming and reconciling man and of establishing the reign of purity and truth and love and peace on earth, found a medium and a home in him. And when, at the last, either the mission of mercy must be abandoned, or the earthly life must be surrendered, his choice was immovable, his free, entire will was fixed, and love had its perfect work. Love of God and love of man serenely asserted their supremacy. “Even so, Father.” “Thy will be done.” “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,” and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, a true and holy and proper sacrifice to God. “For Christ hath loved us,” saith the apostle, “and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour.”

All the while, men were the visible and the only direct agents in the crucifixion. So far as appeared,

the event, however abhorrent to justice, occurred perfectly naturally, and according to the ordinary course of things. Satan might enter into the heart of Judas Iscariot, as indeed he is believed to do wherever a wicked purpose is harboured in any human soul, and the spirit of all evil might be equally busy with the less conspicuous parties concerned in the horrible transaction. But temptation is not compulsion, and the perpetrators of this murder simply obeyed the command of their own vile will. The holy God who sees the end from the beginning, foreknew this result, as He foreknows every crime, and determined in this, as in countless instances besides, to bring glory and good out of human wickedness; but this must not be suffered to conceal from us the independent fact, that that which He foreknew was wholly and only the unprompted, native, free choice of men. Had the dread result been preordained by God, it had then been, on every just principle, the act of God, and what criminality it involved had been lifted off from the visible instruments and righteously charged against the invisible originator. But the death of Jesus was the act of men, wholly and solely the act of men, and of none else, and the actors were governed, not by an invincible decree of God, and not by a resistless Satanic influence, but simply by their own views of the

character of their victim, by what they imagined was demanded for the safety of their religion and their country, and by strong feelings of revenge and of malice. The undoubted fact was this, some of the Jewish rulers and people hated Jesus intensely, and urged by their passions and their fears, they hurried their country into the murder of the Holy One and the Just. Without question, Jesus fell a sacrifice to jealousy and rage; and without question, the offerers of the sacrifice—the only offerers—were the Jews.

It is pertinent, indeed incumbent, to note, in this place, that whatever the Jews might mean, they certainly did not mean, in this instance, to offer sacrifice to God for their sins; they certainly did not mean hereby to make atonement and to render satisfaction to divine justice. Not a solitary individual in the whole Jewish nation at the time, not a solitary individual among the Roman officials and soldiers, not a solitary individual on the face of the whole earth, had, or could have had, the remotest conception of such a thing. We do not need here to discuss the meaning of an expiatory, propitiatory sacrifice, in the scholastic sense, for that is well understood and admitted on all sides. Such a sacrifice supposes that an individual, or a number of individuals, have come before God to confess their sins, and to implore His forgiveness; and that in

order to move Him to clemency, and to appease His righteous anger, they have taken a certain method of expressing what they feel they deserve, and have laid an innocent animal on the altar, and put it to death, and poured out its life-blood. Not the merest shred of such a meaning as this can be found in the death of Jesus. Where was the temple, the tabernacle, or the altar, where were the persons solemnly presenting themselves before God, where was their confession of sin, their prayer for forgiveness, their offering of sacrifice to God? They are not, nor anything that can be construed into the remotest approach to them. The Jews simply hated Christ, and thought him a criminal, dangerous to their country and their religion, and only worthy of death, and they crucified him.

Was it ever heard of, that an expiatory sacrifice was offered up to God, without the consent of the offerer and even without his knowledge? Was it ever heard of that a certain act of such a supposed offerer, amounted to a sacrifice to God, when not only he did not know it, but when his mind, all the while, was thoroughly possessed with perfectly opposite conceptions of the whole transaction? Was it ever heard of, that on the ground of this so-called sacrifice totally unknown to him, a man could be assured that his sins were atoned, that God's justice was



satisfied, that God's anger was turned away, and that eternal salvation was obtained for him? It seems to throw into utter confusion all consistent ideas of sacrifice, view it how we may, and still more, all consistent ideas of God, in relation to man. The Jews sacrificed Christ, sacrificed him to their vile passions; but as certainly, they offered no sacrifice to God, and never dreamed of such a thing; as certainly they did not mean to atone for their sins, or to render satisfaction to divine justice.

Without questioning what has just been advanced, it is maintained that there is something beyond, which is no less true, and which furnishes a consistent and lofty interpretation of the facts. Man had no sacrifice sufficiently valuable to offer to God, even had he been ever so much disposed to do so. He was doomed to perdition, and was utterly incapable of making the slightest reparation for the past, or of doing anything to appease the righteous anger of God, and to rescue himself from deserved punishment. In these circumstances, God himself finds and offers up a sacrifice to Himself, without the consent or even the knowledge of any creature, and thereafter tells the world that its sin is expiated, that divine justice is satisfied, and that divine anger is appeased. That is to say, the Being, who was supposed to be angry, but who could not have really

been so, takes it upon Himself to cool down His own wrath ; the Being who had been deeply wronged, and who, it is supposed, had demanded extraordinary reparation from the wrong-doers, when the demand is refused, thereafter Himself makes amends to Himself, while His creatures are not only uninterested in the transaction, but perfectly ignorant of it. The Pagan sacrificial rites were fundamentally false, but they had a meaning, nevertheless, a very intelligible meaning. The sacrifices, actually, did something, it was imagined, and something significant, with a view to avert the anger of the gods and to obtain their favour. But in the death of Christ, the acting parties not only did not mean to offer sacrifice to God, but did not know that, anyhow, or in any sense, sacrifice to God was offered. What they did was neither more nor less than this, to perpetrate a horrible crime, a judicial murder. The incongruity, not to use a stronger term, is not to be measured, of God being the real, while men were the visible agents in the crucifixion, of God being Himself at once the offerer up of a sacrifice to Himself, and the acceptor of it when offered, of God acting wholly on Himself and for Himself, appeasing His own anger and satisfying His own justice—His agency all the while being utterly unknown to a single creature, and wholly undiscover-

able from the outward circumstances, and, as we judge, irreconcilable with them.

In the scholastic idea of Christ's sacrifice, there seems inevitably involved the conception of two different Gods, however blasphemous the conception be. There is God in Christ and there is God out of Christ, and these two, in the dogma we are examining, are certainly not one God, for they act different parts and gain two different purposes. The one God wills to uphold the authority, and majesty, and purity of the Godhead; the other God, not in opposition to the first, but acting quite separately, wills to redeem men and to render their redemption consistent with divine authority, and majesty, and purity. In spite of ourselves, we are compelled to conceive two Beings, the one, with an aspect overwhelming and awful, the other benignant, subduing, and tender. When we bow with adoring reverence before the eternal, essential unity, it is not hard to think of distinct aspects blending mysteriously and harmoniously in one Being, or of distinct agencies and influences springing out of one source; but this forces us to separate the Divine nature into two parts, to place the severed unity in two different regions, at the same moment, and to imagine two agents moving, if not in hostile, in quite separate directions. There is more than this, ne-

cessitating, not the sublime Tri-unity of Scripture, the Eternal, threefold distinction in the one uncreated essence, but virtually two Gods. The one God is represented as angry with the other God, and the incarnate God is represented as bearing the wrath of the first—and this with a view to strike awe into the moral universe, and to prove the divine abhorrence of sin, and the impossibility of pardon without adequate satisfaction to justice. It would be painful to pursue illustration in this line; but he who will piously and humbly follow it out for himself, will find that we have touched only the outer verge of a circle of impossibilities and contradictions.

Jesus the Incarnate was the substitute of men, and acted and suffered in their room. But plain as these terms seem, it is yet a question unsettled what they actually convey. By one school of theologians some very beautiful but purely fanciful illusions have been founded on this apparently simple statement. Christ becomes not a man, but man, the ideal man, humanity in its normal and total development, such as the Great Father could look upon with satisfaction, and in which He could find a faithful embodiment of His own primitive eternal conception. God sought to behold, and would have men behold, in a living form that which, till the Incarnation, had existed only in idea. Christ was humanity imperson-

ated, and what he did and suffered and achieved, man did and suffered and achieved. Christ was a type of the idea and the destiny of the race, and in him God recognised not an individual but a totality—man, humanity, the race—the race contending against privation, and grief, and pain, and rising above them, struggling with temptation and conquering it, bearing all the direful consequences of sin, in a sinful world, but recovering from them,—going down to death, but bursting away from its grasp, and rising into life again, redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled for ever. For the satisfaction and the joy of the Divine mind, and for the ultimate salvation of the world, Jesus our Lord personated and represented the human race, and was to God the earnest and first fruits of the final harvest of all time.

Whatever beauty, and whatever blending of truth, the imaginative and mystical soul may find here, to the plain understanding of common men, it is fundamentally and wholly fictitious; too ingenious, too recondite, and too far-fetched to be true. Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the man Jesus, was a single unit of the human race, like any other individual man. It is indispensable to the reality, and simplicity, and purport of the divine intervention, that he should be this and no more than this. He had an individual human mother, was born in a particular spot, and

at a precise date, stood in personal, individual relationship with kindred, with neighbours, with associates and friends, with general, Jewish society, and lived, and died, and filled out, with his individual being and doing, a definite span, and no more, in the outstretching course of time. Jesus was not humanity, but a man; his own individual self, and no more. Jesus was not the ideal man, and could not be. With profound reverence, we venture to think that the Divine idea, that which lay at the root of the Incarnation itself, was something totally different, and far higher and brighter. God's ideal, if we dare conceive it, was not man, in a world of pain and sin, not man sorrowing, suffering, struggling with evil, though rising above it and confronting death, though conquering it; not this at all, but man in immortal life, man set free from sorrow, and pain, and temptation, and sin, man for ever ascending in intelligence, and wisdom, and purity, and love, and sweetness, and beauty, unfolding his entire God-given nature, and speeding his way onward in an interminable course, opening out, without end, into new regions of eternal life and light. Can we wonder that, for the realisation of an idea so grand and so blessed, even the Great God should contemplate a sacrifice which only He could make, and should adopt a method all-divine, of transcendent mystery, but of illimitable efficiency?

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It was even so in very truth, for "God spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all."

It comes out of all this, that there is a sense—a natural and intelligible sense—in which Jesus the Incarnate was the substitute of men, and acted and suffered in their room. But the language is strictly figurative, and we must not forget that a figure can never be so exact and so perfect that it shall convey the whole spiritual reality, and nothing but the spiritual reality. In certain points it will prove a safe help and guide to thought, but in others it will be found inapplicable and untrue. The life of Jesus was wholly a vicarious, a substituted life; his humanity was not a natural, but a preternatural humanity, and was called into being, not for itself's sake, but wholly for man's sake, and, except on this account, it had never existed at all. Certainly, Jesus appeared in the world in the room of man, to do for man what man could not do, or would not do, for himself, and to reconcile and restore the sinful human soul to its God. But we shall only destroy a grand and just idea, and turn it into confusion and falsity, if, forgetting that the language in which it is conveyed is largely figurative, we cast it into the form of a hard, logical proposition.

Christ was not the substitute of men in all, or even in many, of the senses in which these words

admit of being understood. For example, he was not selected by men to live and act in their name; the generations of men were never consulted on the subject, and certainly never signified their concurrence in such a selection. Not a single generation, not a single individual in any of the generations, had ever dreamed of such a selection. But it is supposed that God, in perfect harmony with the human will of Jesus, arranged this substitution, without the consent or the knowledge of His creatures. Men, being simply criminals before God—criminals lying under a sentence of death, which it was impossible for them, themselves, to escape, it was ordained that Jesus should take their place, and suffer the penalty of their crimes, and thus set them free. But if we demand proof of this divine ordination, not a shred of proof can be produced. Secret things belong to God, and of all secret things, the most secret and awful must be His eternal purposes. There is something appalling in the thought of a human being professing to have access to an ordination of God. Inferences, drawn from obscure and ambiguous ancient oracles; conclusions, based on isolated phrases and terms, must be abjured, as wholly impious. In such a case, nothing can satisfy a truly reverent soul but a clear and express revelation of a secret decree, which had lain from eternity in the



Divine mind. But we look in vain for such a revelation, or anything in the least approaching it. There may be texts in the Old Testament which it is possible so to interpret, that they shall not be wholly subversive of the notion of a divine decree of substitution and vicarious punishment, but there is not a single text of Scripture in which this notion or anything approaching it is directly expressed, or in which even it is natural, far less necessary, to presuppose it.

Logicians, in their pious ingenuity and subtlety, have striven to systematise and harmonise revealed truth, to trace *ab initio*, or rather *ab eterno*, the steps of God's procedure, to find out the secret grounds on which each step was taken, and could be justified in rectitude and wisdom, to discover the everlasting underlying principles of human redemption, and, by means of the dogma of substitution, to unravel the clue to all the winding intricacies of spiritual providence. But they have simply dwelt so long and so fondly on their own thoughts, that they have at last believed them to be divine, and, transforming their own poor contrivances into plans of God, and the speculations of time into the decrees of eternity, they have gone to the Scriptures to see the delusion confirmed by the highest authority. After the abundant and perplexing experience of the last thousand years, it is not surprising, but very easy of belief that they

have found, at least have persuaded themselves that they have found, what they sought, and that with perfect honesty, and much ingenuity and skill, they have been able to make the phrases and terms of the New Testament consort with their cherished dogma of vicarious sin and punishment.<sup>1</sup>

In a beautiful passage of ancient prophecy which has been already quoted and explained, we read, "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, he was wounded for our transgressions,"—wholly on account of our transgressions, certainly not on account of his own,—“and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” As the words lie before us, in their obvious and natural meaning, every one feels that they are simply and touchingly true; but who, except in the overmastering desire to maintain a foregone conclusion, and to carry out a one-sided scheme of thought, could have imagined that this or any similar passage contained the strange and revolting idea, that God imputed the sins of men to

<sup>1</sup> Few, who have not actually experienced it, can have any proper idea of the almost insuperable difficulty of overcoming the effect of a systematic, scientific, theological training. Certain dogmas from the first are fixed in the mind of the student as of divine authority, and hardly any amount of evidence is able afterwards to persuade him, that instead of sacred truths, these are only human, and not wise, and not just modes of interpreting truth.

Jesus the Messiah, laid them upon him and put them to his account, and that, on this ground, Jesus, as the substitute of sinners, was chargeable with the entire amount of human sins, from the beginning to the end of time. It is easy to utter or to write down this language, but have we ever calmly put before our minds what it really involves. To impute sin to any being, must mean one or other or both of two things, either that he is considered, judged to be actually guilty of the sin imputed to him, or that he is to be dealt with as if he were actually guilty of it. Jesus Christ was perfectly holy and was justly chargeable with no sin whatever, against God or man. That is an admitted fact ; and of all beings in the universe, the Omniscient best knew the fact. To say that God nevertheless imputed sin to Jesus, that is, considered, judged, thought him to be guilty of sin, is direct blasphemy. The thing was impossible, because it was not true, in no sense true, and God, of all beings, knew that it was not true.

Sin has a very distinct and unambiguous meaning, it is the conscious resistance of the human to the divine will ; or, more accurately still, it is the conscious resistance of the human will to what is known to be true, and right, and good. From its very nature it can lie nowhere but in the mind, it is the conscious act of the mind, and nothing

but this; it is the mind desiring, choosing, purposing in the face of reason and conscience. To be justly imputed or reckoned to any being, sin must be the act of the being. It cannot be deposited within him, like some material substance, in a chamber or a cellar, and it cannot be put on him or affixed to him like an adhesion on his person or his dress. If it be the act of his soul, it is justly imputed to him; if it be not, then to impute it to him, to hold that he is guilty when he is not, is an atrocious crime, it is an utter falsity and clear unrighteousness. The idea of putting the sins of a being who is guilty on or in another being who is innocent, of making the innocent chargeable with them and putting them to his account, would be gross injustice if it were possible; but it is not possible, the thing is a pure, sheer absurdity.

In the sphere of pure imagination, very wide licence is permitted with safety. We can fancy a tree to be a living being, and can readily picture it to ourselves as such, with its head, and feet, and heart, and trunk, and arms, and limbs. We can fancy it endowed with the power of speech, and rehearsing to the night-winds the tale of its growth, its lost companions, the storms that have swept over it, and the springs, and summers, and winters it has seen. But in the sphere of reality

there can be no licence, one single step beyond truth and fact. Whatever we may fancy, we can never think, never, in sane mind, judge that a man is a beast of the forest or an eagle of the sky. And were it even possible in some moment of wild aberration to form such a thought, there would be something more frenzied, and more outrageous still, in building up a long succession and a complicated system of ideas, on the absurd basis that a man was a four-footed beast or a bird of the air. To all such representations, as that God thought, judged, reckoned Jesus to be chargeable with the sins of men, or that Jesus had the sins of men laid on him, or imputed to him, the decisive reply must be, they cannot be true, the thing they assert is utterly impossible and absurd.

The question is asked, with much confidence, may not a responsible agent, without being considered, judged to be guilty of sin, be, nevertheless, for the sake of others in whom he is interested, dealt with, treated, as if he were guilty—especially, may he not be so treated, when his own free and full consent has been given to the arrangement? God did not and could not judge, consider that Jesus was chargeable with the sins of men; but did He not treat him, and act towards him, as if he were chargeable with them? It is quite true, and a common enough ex-

perience in our world, that one man shall become surety for another, and shall make himself responsible for the payment of a sum of money, or for the performance of certain services. It is quite true, also, that, failing the principal, his surety is bound in law to pay the money, and to secure the performance of the stipulated services. But even in this event the security is never charged with any crime, never considered or reckoned, guilty, because the principal has been guilty. The security must bear, as he has engaged to do, the consequences of the principal's default, but that is all. And besides, it must be borne in mind that there are clear and well-understood limits even to this vicarious responsibility. If an individual were to offer, to suffer imprisonment or banishment or death, in the room of a criminal who had been sentenced to any of these punishments, human law, and every righteous human judge, would simply and instantly reject the offer. Such a thing could not be tolerated for a moment; it is abhorrent to all equity and all justice. Law pronounces that the transgressor shall be punished, but it does not recognise, and cannot permit, that another, innocent of crime, shall be punished in his stead. Is it possible to conceive that God has done what is abhorrent even to human law, and still more to the natural conscience of man? Is it possible to conceive that

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God should treat the innocent Saviour, and should act towards him as if he had been guilty of sin, when he had not?

We are told that the dying agony of Jesus was not owing to his bodily sufferings; nor yet to the anguish which pierced him, when he thought of the sin of the world, which was even then exhibiting itself in so revolting a form; nor to the sense of misappreciation and of ingratitude on the part of the beings whom he loved; but to a cause far more mysterious and awful, to the secret anger of God the Father. God, acting in His official, judicial character, regarded Jesus as the substitute of sinners, and poured out on his soul, without measure, the vials of divine wrath. In all simplicity and earnestness, and with deep reverence, we ask, is it possible for any devout soul to put this idea, in all its naked horror, before itself, even for an instant? Can the conception be endured that the Great God was angry, was even displeased, in any sense, on any ground, with Jesus on the cross? That moment which needed, above all others, infinite sympathy and yearning love, was it the chosen moment for the outpouring of cruel and unmerited wrath? It is impossible. Facts, not fancies or fictions, must be dealt with here. All are agreed, that when Jesus hung on the cross, he was perfectly blameless and spotless,

suffering, but suffering unjustly. He was then actually giving the last proof of unconquerable fidelity and love to God and to man; and what is still more, he was then actually achieving that which the Father was to convert into the mightiest instrument for touching and subduing the heart of man, and for reconciling and redeeming the world to Himself. These are the facts beyond dispute. Is it possible to conceive that, instead of these, God saw only a mere fiction of law, and acted towards Jesus as if he were a guilty being—the guiltiest of all the guilty? Who can believe it? If there was an instant in the whole life of Jesus, when God must have been infinitely well pleased in His beloved Son, it must have been then, when he was bearing the unmerited, illegal, and most merciless indignities and agonies of crucifixion. At any and every period of Christ's earthly life, anger towards him on the part of God must have been impossible, because there never was, or could be, the smallest cause for such a sentiment; but on the cross, when he was offering himself to God, a willing and a holy sacrifice, there was not only no cause for anger, but infinite cause for divine satisfaction and joy.

As for official, judicial anger, what does it mean? and who can attach even the shadow of an idea to it, without darkening the purity and the honour of the



Almighty? Are we to imagine that He was really pleased, but officially angry, and that His face wore the hypocrite's mask—a frown put on, but concealing a true delight? It is inexpressibly revolting to think that the Great God made-believe that He was wroth with a being with whom He was altogether satisfied, and made-believe that He saw sin in him, who He knew was perfectly sinless. But even this is not all, and not the most abhorrent. Turning to the other side of the scholastic dogma, are we prepared to credit the involved assertion, that God makes-believe that men are sinless, whose own hearts tell them that they are very sinful; and makes-believe that men are perfectly righteous, who He knows all the while are yet unrighteous? It cannot be. That which rests not on plain fact, but on legal fictions—that which necessitates impossible make-beliefs, and which brings no evidence, but only gratuitous assumptions, cannot be of God, but must be wholly of man.

Substitution, not in a fictitious, but in a beautiful and noble and free and wide sense, is not unknown even in a selfish and sinful world. Human nature furnishes marvellous instances of self-sacrifice for others, by the aid of which we are able to conceive the higher Divine mystery. The mother who watches day and night by the bed of her child, smitten with a deadly plague, who lives only so long as to see the

dying one restored, and then catches the mortal infection and dies! The father clinging to the prodigal, whom all besides have abandoned, descending with him, without partaking his guilt, as he sinks to beggary and crime, pursuing him year after year with tender counsels, or with silent grief, and with loving prayers and tears and looks, and who dies of a broken heart, without knowing the holy change, which his death at last produced! The youth plunging into the deep to save a drowning brother, and who, after incredible exertions, reaches him, seizes him, is able only to hold him up till other help arrives, and then himself sinks and perishes! The physician, knowing certainly that the attempt must be fatal, but would as certainly be the means of saving life to the community, deliberately going alone into the room where lay a dead body which contained the secret of a then unknown and terrific disease, opening the body, discovering the seat and nature of the disease, writing what he had discovered, affixing the writing to the dead body, that it might be found at once by the first who entered the room, and who then simply laid him down and died!

These are among the known examples, not indeed of vicarious sin, for that is for ever, absolutely impossible, but of vicarious suffering. These are glowing flashes of love from heaven in a dark and cold

world. There must be an Eternal sun of love, out from which these are scattered and imperfect radiations; there must be a parent fountain of pure, infinite generosity, an original form and type of moral nobility. God is perfect love, God must be essentially, eternally, self-sacrificing. His rational creatures, His children, the souls He hath made, are unutterably dear to Him, and within the limits of truth and right, there is nothing which He is not willing to do for them. Their true blessedness, the perfect salvation and the progressive development of their entire nature as He first fashioned it, is the end and the joy of the infinite Father.

Amidst the reign of eternal laws, which never are or can be violated; under the sway of eternal justice, which proclaims and secures that sin is death, and that only holiness is life, it abides for ever true that God is love, self-sacrificing love; and the last and highest utterance of God's love is Christ—the spoken, articulated Word, (Logos,) within which lies the sublime idea, God.

It is quite true that the human in our great Redeemer was not a mere passive instrument, but a perfectly voluntary agent. The human will, not passively, but freely and gladly harmonised with the Divine, and when death was inevitable Jesus voluntarily and wholly gave himself up to God, for the

accomplishment of God's purposes, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. But it abides none the less true, that in the highest sense the sacrifice for men was made by God. Christ was God's, Christ was God, God in the form of man, God expressed and pronounced, so far as it was possible for a created medium to give forth the uncreated reality. The infinite Father, in boundless pity, looked down on His undutiful children, and yearned to rescue them, by regaining their hearts, and drawing them back to allegiance and to peace. With God-like mercy, He unveiled all which was possible of Divine purity, and truth, and beauty, and sweetness, and lovingness, and compassion—He humbled Himself, descended to the level of His creatures, walked among them, spoke with them face to face, and appealed as He still continues to appeal to their hearts, through the gentleness, the tenderness, the wisdom, the meekness, the patience, the sufferings, the tears, the blood, and the death of Jesus Christ.

The distinction here is radical and fundamental.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a work of great beauty and truth, and the fruit of much spiritual experience, Mr Campbell adheres to the central idea of the scholastic atonement. He fancies that in Christ's awful sense of human sin, and his vicarious repentance on account of it, God found that satisfaction which His justice demanded, and on the ground of which He could righteously forgive. With great respect, I am un-

The sacrifice was not offered up by men at all, or by a substitute in their room, and it was not required to appease God's anger, or to satisfy His justice, or to render Him propitious. The sacrifice was not offered by men to God, but was made by God for men, wholly and solely made by God for men, and for sin, in order that sin might be for ever put down, and rooted out of human nature. This stupendous act of Divine sacrifice was God's instrument of reconciliation and redemption, God's method of conquering the human heart, and of subduing a revolted world and attaching it to His throne—pure love, self-sacrificing love, crucified, dying love! “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

able to look on this, as any other than ■ beautiful and pious illusion, but an illusion, a mere illusion.

See “Nature of the Atonement,” Macmillan, London, 1856.



## CHAPTER X.

### SACRIFICIAL TERMS AND ALLUSIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

SECTION FIRST.—THE EPISTLES.

SECTION SECOND.—ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

SECTION THIRD.—THE GOSPELS.





## SECTION FIRST—THE EPISTLES.<sup>1</sup>

Written by Jews—Addressed, First, to Jews—Jewish Phraseology and Imagery, Inevitable—Exposition of Passages—Beautiful, Natural Sense—Christ's Death, and Ancient Sacrifices—Epistle to Hebrews—Typical Language—Use and Abuse—Apostolic Gospel.

IT would have been unnatural, if not really impossible, for the first teachers of Christianity, in their spoken or written utterances respecting the new kingdom of God, to have avoided frequent reference to the earlier dispensation of Moses. They were Jews, all, without exception, Jews, and this single fact throws light on several of the peculiarities of the New Testament. The heavenly truth uttered by the

<sup>1</sup> In order to the faithful discussion of the subject of this chapter, I have specially gone over the whole of the New Testament, and have endeavoured to note every passage in which Christ's death for sin is mentioned or alluded to. One or more passages may have been overlooked, but I am not aware of any omission, and must think it at least not probable. Necessarily only a few out of very many passages are quoted; but I believe that all the texts, without exception, which are usually supposed to bear most strongly in favour of artificial theology, will be found in the succeeding pages.

Redeemer fell into minds necessarily influenced very strongly by the associations, the ideas, and the spirit of Judaism. The thoughts of the first apostles and preachers respecting Christ's gospel, like all new thoughts in any mind, connected themselves, of necessity, with their earlier experiences and knowledge, and were modified by them to a large extent. In attempting to conceive fresh truth, we are forced to relate it, by one means or another, to the previous contents of our minds, and to attach it, as closely as possible, to familiar associations, images, phrases, and terms. These images and terms, in their new relations, may mean more than they at first contained, they may even mean something quite different; but the old speech, wisely accommodated and adapted, is the happiest, as it is the readiest, which we can use in order to present to our own minds, or to others, intelligently and interestingly, a new meaning, which we have come to apprehend. The apostles would have acted unnaturally if, in speaking of Christ, they had not often gone back to the temple, and the altar, and the sacrifices, and the blood.

Another thing must be borne in mind, that the first Christian preachers and writers, themselves Jews, addressed Jews; at the least, first of all, they addressed Jews. And there was certainly no way in which they could approach their kinsmen according

to the flesh, with such marked advantage, as on the side of Judaism. Comparisons or contrasts between the earlier and the later truth, references to ancient facts and types, the frequent use of words and phrases which had been consecrated in Judea for ages, were inevitable, without doing violence to nature, and to all the laws of human thought and speech. We are compelled to think that the fresh, glad tidings of Heaven's mercy could not possibly have been given forth, first of all, save in Jewish phrase and form, and that, first of all, Christ must, of necessity, have been preached through the voice, and the institutions, and the spirit of Moses.

It is easy to see that a certain amount of disadvantage, and of danger, was inseparable from this fact. In the application, however skilfully, of old language to new thoughts, there was a risk that to some, perhaps to many minds, the old and not the new ideas might be suggested. And then, in the use, however wise, of imagery, and metaphor, and type, there was the further risk, that what was meant for figure might be taken for fact, and that what was announced as the antitype of an ancient symbol, might be conceived to be a mere repetition of that symbol, instead of a totally different, and higher, and purer reality. It is very obvious that the kind of danger here supposed must be

enhanced a thousandfold, when a piece of writing is placed, as the New Testament is, before men, all whose associations, and experiences, and modes of thinking, and actual knowledge, are wholly different from those, as well as of the writers of the piece, as of the persons to whom it was originally addressed. Hence the necessity, in all cases, for discriminating, temperate, cautious, and modest criticism of the New Testament, in the absence of which the gravest errors, and the wildest extravagance of interpretation, may be pronounced inevitable.

We turn to some of the more familiar terms and phrases of the New Testament which are imagined to involve the idea of satisfaction. "His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." "He is able to save to the uttermost." "He died for us." "He loved us, and gave himself for us." "He was delivered for our offences." "Christ died for the ungodly." "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it." "He came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." "He put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." "We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "We have

redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." "Christ also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." All these, and other similar forms of expression, bear a beautiful and direct meaning, quite apart from the idea of satisfaction to justice—which, on the contrary, would entirely change and ruin their own simple and touching sense. The entire life of Christ on earth, we have seen, was sacrificial, substitutionary, and vicarious; its deep and sole ground was love of man, based on the fact of man's sin, which created the need of redemption. All in all, Christ was a mere, pure sacrifice, and nothing but a sacrifice—a sacrifice to God; but more truly still, and in the highest sense of all, a sacrifice made by God for men. Christ lived, emphatically he died, wholly and solely for men and for sin; to put away sin, to redeem the human soul from sin—not so much from punishment, which was only a secondary result, but from sin. The texts quoted above express, in varying form, these imperishable thoughts. And nothing but an acquired and artificial scheme and habit of thought prevents this from being perceived at once,

We have been so trained to associate a peculiar sacredness with certain scholastic distinctions and divisions, that when we open the New Testament, it is almost impossible for us not to force into its terms what they could never of themselves have suggested, what indeed is entirely destructive of their natural meaning. It is like an introduction to a new world, like breathing a pure, divine air, when we break through the imprisonment and the fetters of a merely human system, and stand beneath the free light of heaven, and look with our own eyes on the glorious, spiritual revelations spread out before us by the Only Wise and True.

There are three passages in the New Testament in which we find a word of much greater force than in any of those already brought forward. "Whom God hath set forth, a propitiation, *ἱλαστήριον*, through faith in his blood."<sup>1</sup> "He is the propitiation, *ἱλασμός*, for our sins."<sup>2</sup> "God sent His Son to be the propitiation, *ἱλασμός*, for our sins."<sup>3</sup> It is unnecessary to notice the distinction between the two words here employed, which have the same root, and amount to the same sense. The Pagan meaning of *ἱλασμός* is undoubted; the word was constantly used by Pagan writers to mark the supposed effect of sacrifices, in propitiating the gods to whom they

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 25.<sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 2.<sup>3</sup> 1 John iv. 10.

were offered. But we have to recall the fact, that the Jewish translators<sup>1</sup> of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, in rendering the distinctive word *Kāphār*, employed the term *ἱλασμός*, while at the same time it was proved, by several undoubted examples, that this common Pagan sacrificial term was not used by them at all in the Pagan sense, but in a sense most widely different. Precisely on the same grounds, we argue that while the inspired writers of the New Testament used the accepted, sacrificial word *ἱλασμός*, this is no proof that they used it in the accepted meaning. That meaning, as accepted by the Pagan world, was throughout an utter falsity. They were no gods to whom the Pagan sacrifices were offered; the anger which it was sought to appease, by means of these sacrifices, was all unreal, and the appeasing effect was mere delusion. But the apostles of Christianity had something real and true and great to announce, in the room of the falsities and fancies of Paganism. There was a real God, a real hatred of sin, but at the same time a real and infinite love of the human soul. There was also a real propitiation, but immeasurably far away from that which the bewildered and distorted Pagan mind had pictured. Instead of the fiction of an incensed Jupiter or Pluto, there was seen on earth the image of the brightness

<sup>1</sup> See p. 243.

of the God of love. Christ came not to appease anger, for it was owing solely to the unprompted and unbounded mercy of the Father, that he ever lived, and that at last he died on a cross, but to be the wondrous medium of reconciling and restoring human hearts to Him from whom they had revolted. Incarnate love,—bleeding, dying love, is the power whereby God is recovering the world to Himself.

The inspired writers of the New Testament liken the death of Christ on the cross to the animal sacrifices under the law of Moses, and compare and contrast the two in manifold forms. There is no evidence, that any such similitude was ever imagined during the course of the Jewish dispensation itself. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and the twenty-second Psalm, certainly, and in the strongest form, do *now* suggest the idea of a suffering, as well as of a conquering King, and we, with the gospels in our hands, have no difficulty in applying these holy oracles to our blessed Lord, and can only marvel at their touching beauty and their exact truth. But whatever meaning the seer and the singer of old may have attached at the time to their own words, and however piously they may have searched “what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should



follow," it must have been impossible for them, as has already been shown, to have formed the faintest conception of anything like a Messiah offered up in sacrifice, as animals were anciently offered up and slain on the altar. If any ancient Jew succeeded in reaching such a preconception, and was able to regard his bloody offerings as typical of a more bloody offering still, to be laid on some future altar in the distant ages to come, this at least is certain, that no record of the fact can be found, from which there is ground further to conclude, that a fact of the kind never existed.

Even the words of Jesus to his disciples, after the resurrection, confirm this conclusion. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not (the) Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Looking back on the ancient Scriptures, in the light which the life and death of Jesus throw on them, the blindness to us is unaccountable which failed to perceive that the Messiah must needs suffer, and we do not wonder at the implied rebuke uttered by the Saviour. But we must not forget, at the same time, how incongruous and seemingly blasphemous the idea was to the Jewish mind. Perhaps of all men in Judea, or elsewhere in that age, the

disciples, pre-eminently, were placed in circumstances the most likely to remove the deep repugnance to this idea, and to reveal its truth. But even they were utterly blind to the last, foolish and sottish, as all their fathers had been.

It was marvellously different, when the higher illumination of the Holy Ghost had fallen on their minds. We open the New Testament, and there we cannot fail to see that Christ's death is often and closely associated in the minds of the writers with the altar and its offerings. "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us." "We have an altar." "He was once offered to bear the sins of many." "He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Nothing could be more thoroughly natural in the circumstances, and nothing more inevitable, than such language, conveying, however, a very different and a far higher truth, though at the same time, one which bore a striking analogy in some obvious points to the ancient symbols. But in addition to these scattered and occasional phrases, one entire epistle, not a short one, specially and significantly addressed to Hebrews, is occupied with an extended and minute comparison between Judaism and Christianity, pointing out, wherever it is possible, their points of resemblance; but also, and not less faithfully, their points of contrast. Christ is compared with Moses, with Mel-

chisedec, with Aaron, and with the Jewish priesthood as a Divine Institute: the ancient temple, with its compartments, and its utensils, and its officers of various orders, and its endless ceremonies and rites are graphically described, and largely made use of for the purposes of illustration. The epistle is of necessity intensely Jewish. It is a Jew specially and formally addressing Jews, in language, and through associations and experiences which to both were most endeared and most sacred. It is a Jew seeking to introduce Christian truth into Jewish minds, through Jewish channels, and in many forms Christ's death is brought into relation with ancient sacrifices. "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." "By one offering he hath for ever perfected all them that are sanctified." "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

The words of John Baptist, though out of their proper order in this place, may be noted as conveying perhaps the most expressive statement in this relation, to be found in the New Testament, more expressive and significant by far, than those just quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Behold the Lamb of God, who is taking away the

sin of the world." It is the natural, instinctive, fervent utterance of a pious Jew, on first beholding him whom he knew to be the promised Messiah. This was God's Lamb, God's sacrifice, though how and in what sense or in what form, John could not know, for there was no apparent similarity between the type and the antitype. Here was no literal lamb, no beast but a rational man; here was no doomed sacrifice on the altar awaiting the sacrificial knife, but a youthful, hopeful, vigorous life, just entering on a wondrous course of active service. It would be most gratuitous to fancy, that John foresaw the tragical close of our Lord's life. There is not a word or even a distant hint to favour such an idea, and there is nothing in the circumstances to lead us to suppose it. But John certainly did believe, for the words can mean nothing else, that this living man was God's Lamb, somehow,—the true and only spiritual antitype of the sacrifices under the law of Moses. What is yet more, John affirmed that this divine Lamb, at the moment when he spoke, was taking away, and was destined to take away, the sin of the world. Never had lamb or sacrifice of any kind effected such a purpose. In this respect, as we have already shown, the ancient sacrifices were as dark, as vague, and as empty of meaning as a very shadow is of substance. But this divine Lamb, unlike the ancient victims, was

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no shadow, but a substance, a glorious spiritual reality, and was to secure an end which sacrifices not only never could have effected, but were never meant to effect. Christ came not nominally, or formally, or judicially, but really, literally, and for ever to take away the sin of the world—to root it out of the world's heart, out of the world's life—to kill by his life and his death the evil which was killing the soul—to cleanse and revivify humanity—to send through it a healthful pulse of love and purity, and to mature it for an immortal and blessed life in the eternal ages.

The language of the Epistle to the Hebrews is throughout intensely typical, and the subject of Scripture-types is pre-eminently one which demands delicate and cautious treatment, such as, unhappily, it has not always received. In the nature of the study itself, there is strong temptation to indulge a prurient ingenuity and a licentious imagination; and some of the most extravagant, and wild, and even ludicrous examples of so-called religious writing are supplied by students of this branch of sacred literature. Even the severest theologians are apt to stray when they venture on this dangerous ground. A vast science of typology has been constructed on what might have been judged a very slender basis. We have typical individuals and typical classes of persons, typical facts, typical purifications, and typical seasons; and

with laborious ingenuity an ample codex has been drawn up of rules or canons of typical interpretation. It is remarkable that in the Scriptures themselves, no special attention is drawn to types, as if they had some profound, mystical, spiritual meaning, and as if God spoke through them with the desire of awakening a peculiar reverence. The New Testament writers, on the contrary, often refer to the whole of the ancient institutions in a tone by no means indicating either affection or respect. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."<sup>1</sup> Judaism, in the thought of inspired men, was a yoke of bondage; a most galling yoke, also, it appears; for even the apostle Peter, who was not the least Judaistic of the twelve, besought the assembled church of Jerusalem "not to tempt God, and not to put a yoke on the neck of the (Gentile) disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear."<sup>2</sup> "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new-moon, or of the Sabbaths-days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body (substance) is of Christ."<sup>3</sup> The law had a "shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things."<sup>4</sup> A shadow is the most dim,

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 1.<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 10.<sup>3</sup> Col. ii. 16.<sup>4</sup> Heb. x. 1.

vague, superficial, unlikelike, unreal representation which can be given of a substance, showing only the mere outline, and even that, generally, in a distorted and untrustworthy form. No one in his senses would seek the shadow, in order to correct and complete his idea of a substance which was before him.

The peculiar word "type," which is deemed so sacred, and which has been guarded by exact and nice definitions and canons, is used in the New Testament in the most general and free manner possible, certainly without any precision, or sanctity of meaning. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them who walk so, as ye have us for an example," (type.)<sup>1</sup> "So that ye were examples (types) to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."<sup>2</sup> "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example (type) unto you to follow us."<sup>3</sup> "Be thou an example (type) of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."<sup>4</sup> "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples (types) to the flock."<sup>5</sup> "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea; and

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 17.<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. i. 7.<sup>3</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 9.<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 12.<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter v. 3.

did all eat the same spiritual meat"—referring to the manna, a spiritual, that is a preternatural gift from Heaven—"and did all drink the same spiritual drink"—referring to the water supernaturally struck out of the rock—"for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. . . . Now these things were our examples, (types,) to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them. . . . Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed. . . . Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured. . . . Now all these things happened unto them for examples," (types.)<sup>1</sup> To show beyond doubt the true and sole intent of these, and of all types, the apostle immediately adds, "and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world (the last of the ages) have come." It is precisely the thought, almost in the very words, expressed by the same writer in another passage, only with a much more extended application. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and admonition of the Scriptures, might have hope."<sup>2</sup> That is to say, the recorded facts of the Israelitish history, their national annals and their religious experiences, and worship,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 1-11.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xv. 4.



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and faith, and not these only, but all the ancient Scriptures, in all their various parts, are designed to convey to future times instruction, and guidance, and encouragement, and warning. It can hardly fail to occur to us that ordinary human history, in its measure, serves the same great purpose. History hands down to succeeding ages a series of types of humanity, it forms a permanent fund of precious instruction, it is an extended foreshadowing of human character, ever repeating itself, and of human experiences, and of human destinies.

But while all sacred Scripture and all wise secular writing are profitable for our learning, it deserves to be noted, besides, that the facts of daily life, and the objects and operations of nature, are a medium of what may legitimately be called typical teaching. Providence and nature are full of similitudes, similitudes of beautiful and profound meaning to the purified vision. There is a marvellous, universal homogeneity in creation, throughout all its departments of brute matter, and of vegetable, animal, rational, moral, and spiritual life, and even the dullest eye cannot fail to detect some of its patent analogies and images. The beauty of poetry is the revelation of a hidden and higher meaning in common things. It is a rare gift of God to some peculiar souls, an enviable and much envied faculty, which "finds

tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything." But this faculty is prone to be impatient of the obtuseness and blindness of common men, and to frown contemptuously on human reason, and especially on human judgment, with its cautious and slow processes, most galling to the quicker force of insight. One man shall see at a glance the wealth of Peru in a mine, which to another is only dull clay, or worthless stone or sand, though, perhaps, were the mine actually worked, it might eventually turn out that all was not really gold which once glittered to the imagination. Specially gifted minds, not without some counterbalance, find their own reward, a rich one, *in themselves*. In relation to Scripture, and the sphere of spiritual religion, they have moments of exquisite delight, and see, or think they see, and certainly feel what the unendowed never know. They find, as others cannot, the images and types of Scripture, of Providence, and of nature, helpful to their higher well-being, and they supply to commoner, duller souls, materials of holy enjoyment, and even an invigorating stimulus to their God-ward desires. Let no interdict be laid on the mystic fancy, save what right reason and religion impose; let it discover in the ancient Scriptures, what foreshadowings, and similitudes, and types it may: they may be beautiful,

even legitimate, and healthful, and helpful. But we have herein reached the farthest limit of freedom ; they cannot rightfully, and they must not be pronounced divine. Because we think we perceive in any ancient statement, or symbol, or fact, an image of a future spiritual truth, we are not entitled on this ground alone to affirm that the similitude was purposed by God. This introduces a totally new element, which, if true, must rest on other and better evidence. Undoubtedly, all the possible similitudes and issues of all things must be for ever present in the eternal glance ; but to pronounce that any similitude which we perceive, or think we perceive, was pre-ordained and purposed, must be the highest presumption, unless, indeed, the Divine purpose be revealed.

One thing is certain, that the perception of a typical meaning in any symbol, and the interpretation of that meaning, must be almost as various as there are individuals, and must inevitably depend, not only on the extent and the kind of a man's knowledge, but on the character of his judging faculty and on the strength and culture of his imagination. He can only liken the type to what he already knows ; he can only judge of it, according to his capacity, whatever that may be ; and the result can only take its form according as his fancy is poor, and coarse, or disciplined, vigorous and chaste. A Christian man may

act not wisely, who does not allow a reverent and subdued imagination to range the sphere of his spiritual contemplations, but he is more unwise still, who exalts the play of his fancy, however legitimate in its own sphere, into divine thought and divine ordination.

Neither the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews nor any of the writers of the New Testament ever assert that the similitudes which they introduce were ordained as such by God. In announcing the heavenly truth which they were commissioned to teach, they drew, as it was impossible for them not to have done, on their previous associations, and knowledge, and sphere of thought, and so much the more, as these were all common to them with those whom they addressed and were as sacredly dear to both. They had no difficulty in finding many points of likeness, as well as of direct contrast, between the new and the old dispensation. No difficulty in turning to the best account ancient statements, ancient facts, ancient persons, and ancient institutions, and no difficulty in illustrating the new by the old and giving a peculiar interest to the new, especially in the minds of Jews, from its pictured relation to the old. Frequently and freely they compared and contrasted Christ's death with the legal sacrifices. But they never intimated that the legal sacrifices were

ordained by God to be typical and explanatory of the death of Christ; no, not once. The two were quite capable of being compared; and such points of comparison as naturally suggested themselves to their minds, the sacred writers pointed out, but that was all. The inspired statements as they lie before us in the New Testament are perfectly natural and intelligible; they picture a relation now of resemblance and again of difference, a relation which was real, as it was striking. But the more real it is, so much the surer is the conclusion, that if, as was proved, the ancient sacrifices involved no expiation or satisfaction, it must be wholly fallacious to attach this idea to the death of our blessed Lord. What the ancient sacrifices did not themselves contain they could not surely be employed to teach.

Whatever be the relation between type and anti-type, this at least seems certain, and confirmed by invariable usage, that the antitype is something higher than the type, something further removed from the circle of common things. One or two familiar examples will exhibit more distinctly what is here intended. "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."<sup>1</sup> We do not imagine a repetition of the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 40.

ancient phenomenon, another rebellious prophet fleeing from the service of his God, another monster of the deep, and another marvellous swallowing and disgorging. The second is not a fac-simile of the first, but something greater, and better, and truer to nature and to spirit. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. He spake of the temple of his body."<sup>1</sup> We do not imagine the demolition of huge masses of stone and mortar, and again the noise of axes, and hammers, and of busy workmen rearing a fallen structure. Instead of this, there is the silent revivification, by the invisible power of God, of a body that had sunk in death. "I am the vine, ye are the branches."<sup>2</sup> We do not imagine another vine-like trunk, with other spreading branches on either side. The reality corresponding to the natural image is a relation immeasurably higher, not material at all, but purely spiritual. We understand that a wondrous soul has united other souls to itself by common thoughts, common sympathies; and a profound, common love has so imparted itself to them, and so attracted them into its very depths, that living and luminous and sanctifying influences flow from it into them, and an indissoluble union is generated. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. Whoso eateth my flesh and

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<sup>1</sup> John ii. 19, 21.<sup>2</sup> John xv. 5.

drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.”<sup>1</sup> Here is intensely typical language; but must the reality answering to it be as material and as gross as the words suggest? On the contrary, the antitype is wholly, intensely, and exquisitely spiritual. We understand that there is such a vivid apprehension of the Saviour, such a welcoming of him and of what he is to us, and can do in us, and for us, that he becomes the very life of our life, the stay, and staff and joy, and glory of our inner being.

With the aid of these illustrations which bear directly on the interpretation of almost every verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we turn to the altar of sacrifice and behold upon it an innocent lamb. The offerer comes to acknowledge and adore God, the life-giver, to surrender back to Him that which is wholly His, and to express, in the way divinely commanded, His prayer to be restored to or continued in the separated nation, with all its privileges. The lamb is slain. A deep gash is made in its throat and we see it quivering and struggling, and slowly bleeding to death. If now we pass to the scene on Mount Calvary, it occurs at once to thought, that there is no offerer here, either to acknowledge, or adore, or surrender, or express his desire or prayer to God—no priest and no altar. But there is a sacrifice, a

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 51, 54.

manifest and most costly sacrifice, of life. Must we imagine it to be a mere repetition, in all the disgusting and coarse features, of the ancient offering?—nay, more, must we imagine it to be not only not of a higher character than the Mosaic rite, but immeasurably lower and worse, (for here is not a beast, but a man, a spotless, holy being,) more revolting, more inhuman, more horrible? There are points of resemblance, it is true, which we cannot fail to mark. The broad, dark fact stands out common to both—death, a violently cruel death. The shedding of the life-blood is characteristic of both, but profound and wide contrasts are numerous as they are obvious. Animal life, on the one hand, human life, on the other hand, is sacrificed. The one is wholly an unconscious act; the other is conscious and deliberate. The one is enforced endurance; the other is voluntary surrender to God and to man. The one affects only ceremonial offences; the other deals with real, human sins, as a wrong against God and the moral universe. The one secures outward reconciliation and restoration to divine worship, and to the separated people; the other effects the real restoration of the human soul to God, to purity, and love, and heaven. Incarnate, crucified love kills sin in the heart—that is the simple fact of all Christian experience.

It is astounding, but it is simply true, that this



very Epistle to the Hebrews, with its highly-coloured figures of a priest, a sanctuary, a most holy place, an altar, a sacrifice, and a blood of sprinkling—all which, instead of mere figures, often very forced and mixed, have been taken for actual literal facts—this epistle, on which so much has been built—this Epistle to the Hebrews, intensely Hebrew as it is, contains the very distinctest and most emphatic declarations of the purely ceremonial character of the ancient rites and of the immeasurably higher and wholly spiritual nature of the sacrifice of Christ. It is from the Epistle to the Hebrews we learn that “it is not possible”—never was, and never could be, possible—“that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”<sup>1</sup>—real sins. It is in the Epistle to the Hebrews we find it declared, with such emphasis and such clearness, that the blood of Christ, the symbol of divine, reconciling love, acts not on the past of a man’s history, but on the immediate present—not on his outward relations, but on his inward being, and without touching the facts of his history, wholly changes, and cleanses, and sanctifies his nature. “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, (wholly possessed and moved) by the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 4.

Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the Living God.”<sup>1</sup> The antithesis is put with beautiful clearness and with irresistible force. The one member of the contrast touches only the flesh; the other reaches the soul, the depths of the soul, the conscience. The one takes away surface defilement; the other washes out real evil from the heart, and does so by creating love of God, who so loved us. There is power, not conventional, factitious power, but real, spiritual power in this—a power redeeming us from dead works, (works which carry death within them, and have death as their proper and necessary fruit, for the wages of sin is death;) power which translates us from death to life, from deathful works to a living God, and a living, holy service. The purpose of the blood of Christ, of Incarnate, dying love, according to this inspired writer, the end which it contemplates, and which it effects, is real, inward purification, neither more nor less. The blood of Christ is only and wholly a moral influence, not the ground of any imagined, legal acquittal, but the deep cause of a spiritual renewal, and of a purity which springs from humble trust in God’s free grace.

Passing now from the Epistle to the Hebrews, one of the most extended and clear and simple accounts

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 13, 14.

to be found in the apostolic letters of what we should now call the nature of the gospel, of the mission intrusted to the apostles of Christianity, and of the message which they were empowered to announce to the world, is given in 2 Cor. v. 14-21. The question may be supposed to be put, Who were these apostles who traversed the world, preaching and labouring and suffering and dying? What did they mean? what was their aim? and what was the influence under which they were acting? The question is answered with great distinctness. "Love of Christ"—not love of glory, or of wealth, or of personal aggrandisement of any kind, but pure love of Christ—"constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead"—doomed to death. A constraining, overpowering force of gratitude had laid hold of these men, generated by the faith that God had so loved them, and that, in the love of God, Christ had lived and died for them. "And that he died for all, that they who live"—who have through this means been raised and restored to a new life—"should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." And this profound sense of the dying love of Christ, and of the love of God in Christ, had laid open to them a totally new world, and revealed and generated a totally new centre of being, a new aim and end.

Hitherto they had been *in the flesh*, saw with their fleshly eyes, and thought and felt under the influence of common outward interests, ambitions, and relations. But now they were *in the Spirit*, the holy Spirit of God, of Christ; and the consequence was, that a totally new mode of thinking and feeling and looking at everything possessed them. Jewish ideas and prepossessions and prejudices were in great measure gone; a wide, quickening, humanising, divine influence reigned in them, and men and things were no longer to them as they had before been. "Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh." The distinction between Jew and Gentile, countrymen, kinsmen, and strangers, bond and free, was no more recognised, but a higher, broader, an all-embracing love took its place. "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh"—known him and boasted of him as a Jew, the son of David, one of the holy nation—"yet now henceforth know we him no more." He is to us the symbol, not of glory to the Jew, but of God's unspeakable love to the world. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

At this point the question may be supposed to be put, Whence, and how has this great spiritual revolution originated? Is it human, or divine?—a

thought of these apostles themselves, an effort, an achievement of theirs, or purely and solely a divine work? Again the question is answered with great distinctness; and we are taught that the work and the thought are wholly divine, wholly springing out of divine, reconciling love. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by (or in) Jesus Christ." Not a word or hint is there here of reconciling Himself to us, appeasing His anger, satisfying His justice, or expiating our sin. If Paul had anything of this kind in his thoughts, at least he has left no record of the fact. The great, we are entitled to assume, the sole idea in his mind, as he recalled his own experience of Christianity, and reflected on what he knew of the experience of others, was this, God hath reconciled us, won us back, to Himself by Jesus Christ, "And hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." But what is the ministry of reconciliation? "To wit, that God was in (or by) Christ, reconciling the world to himself"—not adopting a strange expedient whereby to reconcile Himself to men, and render it consistent and honourable and safe in Him, as a just God, and the Moral Governor of the universe, to pardon them; not this, not this at all, but exactly the reverse, "Reconciling (gaining back, recovering) the world to himself"—"not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Ought we not to pause with great seriousness, and ponder this singularly simple and clear and unencumbered deliverance of holy Scripture? The God in whom Paul trusted was not a Being who needed first of all to be propitiated and appeased, and who must first of all have sin atoned for, and justice satisfied, and law honoured by sacrificial suffering; but One who loved the world with an infinite love, who was infinitely in earnest that it should turn to Him and live, and who had adopted the most overwhelming method of expressing His love, and of laying open to His creatures the very depths of His heart. The God in whom Paul trusted was not a Being who waited in silent anger till men came to His feet, and either themselves, or through a substitute, did something which should render it consistent and dignified in Him to forgive them; but One who came forth to seek and to save the lost, and to tell men that He wanted nothing, but that they should turn to Him and live, proclaiming it with His own voice, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" That is the gospel which apostles were commissioned to announce to the world, and which was mighty, through God, in the regeneration of myriads!

One question now remains, of very obvious practical importance, How did the apostles acquit themselves of their sacred trust, if such it was, as these

sentences convey? What did they imagine that faithfulness to their trust required of them in dealing with men? A modern teacher or preacher would probably feel, that his first duty, in fulfilling a sacred ministry, was to show the necessity of atonement for sin, and satisfaction to justice, before God could pardon; to explain how this necessity had been completely met by the obedience and sufferings of Christ in the room of sinners; and to urge men to seek for pardon on this ground. But Paul has forgotten, at all events he distinctly omits, this, as many judge, corner-stone of the Christian faith. Perhaps in the hurry and fervour of speaking it escaped him, though so vitally and essentially important. We cannot make this excuse. He is not speaking, but writing, dictating to an amanuensis, who shall read over again to him what has been put down. He is writing a very important letter to the Corinthian church, leisurely, collectedly, carefully. He is dealing with the most central and the most vital truths of Christianity; and he omits altogether that which is supposed to be the truest and highest of them all. He had shown what he had conceived to be the gospel, the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God, by Jesus Christ, was subduing the heart of the world, and reconciling it to Himself. It follows immediately, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ,

as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." This is all, in Paul's judgment, which God asks; this is the one aim and end of all God has done—"be ye reconciled to God." And now clothing His thoughts in Jewish imagery and phrase, he adds, "for He hath made him to be sin (a sin-offering) for us, who knew no sin." But the apostle brings out a far nobler, a diviner, meaning than the old language and the old worship ever expressed. Christ, he suggests, was the true sin-offering, the only true sin-offering, the world ever saw, or ever will or can see. He did what no Jewish sacrifice was ever intended to do, what no sacrifice, Jewish or Pagan, ever could do, he actually, really took away sin, took it, and takes it, out of the heart, by his sacrifice and death. God hath made him to be a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin, "that we might be made the righteousness (rightness or rightenedness) of God by him"—that we might be divinely rightened by him.

In the same simple, beautiful, and subduing tone and spirit, far, far away from all ideas of expiation and satisfaction, the apostle closes his message, as an ambassador of Heaven, "We then, as workers together with God, beseech you also, that ye receive not the (this) grace of God in vain."



## SECTION SECOND—ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Early History of Christianity—First Christian Sermon—Peter's Gospel—Martyr Stephen—Ethiopian Eunuch—Cornelius—Saul of Tarsus, His Conversion, His Ministry—Antioch, Athens, Miletus, Philippi—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

THE early history of Christianity is invaluable as a key, the only one which we possess, to that which was uppermost in the thought and in the heart of the first disciples, in the years immediately succeeding the death of their Master. It needs no reasoning to prove that they knew thoroughly well what Christ's gospel really was. The personal friends and companions of Jesus, who had been most intimately and affectionately associated with him for three years, and during that period had been constantly under the influence of his deeply marked character, and of his special and singular spirit, of his public teaching, and of his most retired and sacred utterances; who had witnessed his death, and had seen him, and had intercourse with him after his

resurrection ; who, after his departure, had, at his command, waited in solemn prayer to God, during seven days, for that Holy Ghost whom he had promised to send forth, and on whose souls at last an extraordinary divine power had descended, — they certainly must have known what their Master intended should be preached, as his gospel, and above all, must have known that which was most essential and divine in it. And when, only seven weeks after his death, on the day of Pentecost, they assembled in Jerusalem, it is impossible to doubt that their minds and their hearts must have been full of Christ, of his teaching, his thoughts, his spirit, and his very words. They must have burned to speak of him, and to proclaim in the fullest, clearest, and broadest terms, that in him which they had found to be life for themselves, and which they knew was meant to be life to the world and to all times.

A noble occasion of disburdening their full hearts was presented. Jerusalem was crowded with multitudes from all quarters of the known world ; a mighty audience was prepared, and they were not only expected, but invited to speak. And they did speak. Thoroughly instructed as they were in the life, and death, and doctrine of their Lord, glowing with love of Christ, and love of their yet blinded countrymen, specially intrusted with the message of salvation,

and specially endowed to proclaim it, they did speak, and with great freedom, and fervour, and fulness. But their theme, what was it? The expiation of human sin, and satisfaction to divine justice, by the sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus on the cross. Pardon obtained from God, through means of that sacrifice and these sufferings. If ever there was an occasion, whether we look to the speakers or to the hearers, or to the circumstances, when these announcements, supposing them to be fundamental and vital, must have been made, this was that occasion. But they were not made, and nothing like them was once uttered.

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost to the crowding, eager multitudes of Jerusalem, the first Christian sermon ever preached in this world, contains from beginning to end nothing of this kind. The preacher begins by accounting for the unexampled enthusiasm and excitement which the people had witnessed in him and his fellow disciples, on the ground of an influence from above, such as is distinctly foretold in ancient prophecy. He connects this extraordinary divine influence with the power of the risen Jesus, and he declares him to be the true son of David, the Messiah promised to the fathers. He tells of his life, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension; he solemnly adjures all the house of Israel now to know assuredly that God had made

this Jesus, both Lord and Christ; and, finally, he charges home on his countrymen the crime of putting to death God's Anointed. That is the sermon, the whole sermon—surely not given to the world with so serious a fault, as the omission of that which was most essential and most vital for all coming ages to know.

But certain memorable consequences followed this address, in the record of which, perhaps, we may find this great defect supplied. Let us see. The sermon produced a marvellous effect. "Now when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, *μετανόησατε*, and be baptized every one of you in (into) the name of Jesus Christ for (in order to) the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> That very important word, "repent," is ill understood by mere English readers of the New Testament. It does not mean, be sorry for sin; it does not mean this at all, though sorrow for sin is one of the effects included in the far more comprehensive idea which the word expresses. Repent is, simply, change your mind—no more; and repentance is not sorrow for sin, but simply, change of mind—no more. Peter's counsel

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 37, 38.

to the conscience-stricken people of Jerusalem is this, "change your mind." Your mode of thinking has been entirely wrong, your conception of God, of the Messiah, of yourselves, and of sin, has been founded in error. Change your mind: see in Jesus, God's Messiah! see God himself in His Anointed! above all, see God's love to you in him! Turn to this loving God with all your heart—repent—change your mind; and in token of this change, and of your genuine self-surrender, "be baptized every one of you into the name of Jesus, in order to the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

The second Christian sermon ever preached, like the first, fell from the lips of Peter. A vast crowd had collected, on the rumour of the marvellous cure of a lame man, at the gate of the temple, and Peter addressed them. First of all, he again extols Christ his Lord, and ascribes the miracle to his power. Again, he tells of Christ's life, and death, and resurrection, charges them with his murder, and by reference to Moses and all the prophets, is at pains to prove his true Messiahship—his very sufferings and death themselves, long ago foreshown, being among the strongest evidences of the fact. Once more his counsel is, "Repent"—change your mind—"and be converted,"—turn to God,—"that your sins may be

blotted out." Encouraging and urging them instantly to this course, he closes with these words, "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."<sup>1</sup> This is the holy work intrusted to the Redeemer, not to appease God's anger, but to be the highest utterance of God's love,—not to satisfy God's justice, but to be God's messenger to bless mankind,—not to make expiation for sin, but to turn men away from sin, and to fill their hearts with abhorrence of it.

To the same effect, when brought before the council on account of this miracle of healing, Peter's aim is still to exalt his Lord, as the source of that power by which the impotent man was cured, and as the true Messiah,—a stone once rejected, as foretold by the prophet, but now become the head of the corner. The Jewish rulers and people dreamed of another Messiah, by another name than that of Jesus, who was yet to appear for the salvation of Israel. The apostle denounces the visionary hope, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."<sup>2</sup> At a later period, when once more brought before the Sanhedrim and commanded to cease preaching in the name of Christ, the apostles

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 19, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Acts iv. 11, 12.

replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men," and then fell back on the ground which they at first had taken, and reiterated what to them was the highest truth, involving every other, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance"—an entire change of mind—"to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."<sup>1</sup>

Of the course of the gospel during the next ten or twelve years which succeeded the death of Jesus, our knowledge is exceedingly limited. But so far as the scanty materials of information go, there is not a word or hint of sacrificial, expiatory sufferings, of pardon from God procured by these, or of imputation or satisfaction. In the first fervours of Christianity, when, if ever, the true message of the cross, and its supreme significance, must have been proclaimed unweariedly, the subject of apostolic teaching, the chief, almost the sole subject of apostolic teaching, was Christ, the Messiah of God, but rejected and crucified by men,—Christ, the hope of Israel and of the world,—Christ, in whose name was preached to all men the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 29-32.

The first Christian martyr, Stephen, was endowed with uncommon gifts, and had been selected by his fellow-disciples, as the first of seven, who, next to the apostles, were charged with the oversight of the newly-formed church. His extraordinary powers drew down on him the vengeance of the elders and scribes, and he was summoned before the Sanhedrim, and charged with a capital offence. In such circumstances, one baptized, as he was, with the spirit of Christ and of Christianity, in earnest, both to defend his own convictions, and to reach the blinded and hardened consciences before him, could not have kept back the most essential truth of his adopted faith. He certainly did not; but he considered the most essential truth to be this, that God's Messiah, who came to save from sin, and who was actually saving, as he and thousands of others knew in themselves, had been wickedly scorned and crucified. His long address is a recapitulation of Israelitish history leading to this point, that through all the ages God's prophets had been persecuted and slain, and that, at last, the Anointed himself had been basely put to death. He was listened to till he directly charged those before him, in these tremendous words: your fathers "have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and the murderers: who have received



the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." Then they stoned Stephen — a noble exemplar to all times, how most Christianly death may be encountered, be the circumstances what they may. "They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Following his blessed Lord, the first martyr bequeathed to the world a testimony such as only the religion of the cross ever inspired, and only the religion of the cross ever received. "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And, when he had said this, he fell asleep."<sup>1</sup>

The narrative of the Ethiopian eunuch meeting with the evangelist Philip, carries us into a region of faith and hope, of which but few glimpses are afforded. A Gentile, belonging to a remote country, had come to know the God of Israel, and was somehow possessed of a portion of the Jewish Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> He was reading Isaiah liii. when Philip encountered him, and he at once eagerly sought an interpretation of the passage. We are told that "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." The sermon is not given, but we can imagine how, from such a text, he would unfold the character and the work of the Messiah, and present the simple, touching sense of the prophecy. We

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 52, 53, 59, 60.

<sup>2</sup> Acts viii. 28, 35, 37.

can imagine that he would point out how naturally and literally the ancient oracle fulfilled itself in Jesus of Nazareth ; how innocent and patient and meek he was, amidst all his cruel sufferings ; how he died for sins, but not his own—died, to take away sin out of the hearts of men ; how love, divine love, was expressed in his life, and in his cross ; and how, through all, he was proved to be the very Messiah of God. The effect of the sermon we know, and its effect reveals plainly what itself must have been. It brought the eunuch to this conclusion:—"I believe that Jesus is the Son of God"—another name for Messiah, the Anointed of God, who came to save his people from their sins. And on this profession he was baptized.

Closely connected with the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, and, like it, throwing some light into the darkness of ancient heathendom, is the conversion of the Roman centurion, Cornelius. The narrative teems with interest on all sides. The apostle Peter himself, divinely taught, made a marvellous advance on this occasion into the clearer, fuller, broader light of heavenly truth. For the first time, so far as appears, his mind, intensely Jewish before, opened itself wide to the true character of God, as the loving Father of all His children on earth, and not the partial guardian of a single favourite tribe. How these

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noble words of the newly-illuminated and inspired man shatter to pieces and scatter to the winds all our scientific theologies: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."<sup>1</sup>

But we are specially interested to ascertain the manner in which Peter acquitted himself of his apostolic trust. Cornelius and his people were proselytes to Judaism, had heard something of the new truth which had shone on Judea, and were profoundly anxious to know what it really was. They were preternaturally assured that Peter was commissioned and endowed by Heaven to instruct them; and with great earnestness, Cornelius says to him, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." In such circumstances, it is very certain that Peter, whatever else he proclaimed, would not omit the things most essential to salvation. The sermon is before us. It tells of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, and especially, that he was ordained of God, the Judge of the living and the dead, as elsewhere he is declared to be set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel—the touchstone and test, whereby it should be shown whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear. But the sum

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 34-43.

and the grand aim of Peter's words are contained in this sentence: "Christ is Lord of all." He is the Messiah whom God hath sent to bless men in turning them away from their iniquities. "To him," says Peter, on this memorable occasion, "give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Trust in God's Messiah, trust in a loving, reconciling God in Christ, is the germ of spiritual salvation.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus marks a great crisis in the early history of our religion. We have three accounts of this wonderful event—one by the historian of the Acts, another, reported in the words of Paul himself when he addressed the tumultuous assemblage in Jerusalem, and a third, also reported in Paul's own words when he appeared before Agrippa. The accounts, more or less full, are consistent and harmonious. But whether we turn<sup>1</sup> to the words of Jesus to the persecutor of his church, as he travelled on his murderous mission to Damascus, or to the words of Ananias, who was commanded to instruct and direct the penitent, we mark the total absence of everything which bears even the most distant approach to what in these days is called, by way of eminence, *the gospel*. Saul himself, even in the first impetuous warmth of Christian faith and zeal,

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 5, 17.

does not preach this gospel at all, to the perishing sinners of Damascus. But he does preach ; at once, and with all the characteristic ardour of his nature, now fired with a deeper and diviner love than he had ever known, he throws himself into the holy service of his Lord. But his theme is certainly not *the gospel*, as now conventionally understood. We read, "he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God,"—the Messiah. His hearers, referring to his past life, were amazed. "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."<sup>1</sup> That is all which has come down to us of his earliest ministry as an apostle. His subject is the Messiahship ; Jesus, God's Messiah, but always at the same time, Jesus the Saviour of Jew and Gentile, Jesus who came forth from God with this sole purpose, to save from sin, and to publish forgiveness of sins, as the pure, mere gift of God's grace.

The first Christian sermon by the apostle Paul, of which we have any detailed record, was preached in the synagogue of Antioch. It begins with early Israelitish history up to the time of David, proclaims Jesus to be the son of David, and the Saviour of Israel, shows how John, Messiah's forerunner, pointed out Jesus as he that should come after him, relates

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 20, 22.

how he was rejected, condemned, and crucified, but raised again by the power of God, and concludes with these words: "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified (set right, rectified) from all things, from which ye could not be justified (set right, rectified) by the law of Moses."<sup>1</sup> At Lystra Paul and Barnabas were honoured at first exceedingly, and were imagined to be gods in human form. The people, with the priest of Jupiter at their head, brought oxen and garlands, and were ready to do sacrifice to them. Here, surely, was not only a legitimate occasion offered, but a positive necessity created for proclaiming the one only expiatory sacrifice for sin, if this had been the truth, and above all, the highest truth of Christianity. But not a whisper of this kind fell from the lips of God's ambassadors. They only rushed in among the people in consternation, and strove to put a stop to the impiety. "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye turn from these vanities unto the living God."<sup>2</sup>

At Athens, the centre of ancient civilisation, but the stronghold also of ancient idolatry, Paul proclaims<sup>3</sup> the One true God, to them unknown, a

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 16-39.<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 15.<sup>3</sup> Acts xvii. 31.

Spirit, and the Father of spirits; proclaims the living, loving Father, and all souls His offspring, a God not distant, but very near to every one of us; not indifferent, but observant, and ever holding His rational children responsible to Himself. "He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead." This day of judgment some able expositors have suggested—and the idea adapts itself with remarkable fitness to Paul's audience, and to the circumstances—is the whole course of the Christian dispensation on earth, from its beginning to its close, during which the world is tried and proved by Christ, the Incarnate, Crucified One, and the last test is applied whereby it shall be discovered, whether men will yield, or not yield, to the claims of God, appealing to them in their strongest and most subduing form.

At Miletus Paul addressed the elders of Ephesus, where he had long laboured, and in a single sentence expressed the whole aim and meaning of the work of his life—"testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance (an entire change of mind) toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 21.

When Felix the governor, with his wife Priscilla, ■ Jewess, sent for Paul to hear from him concerning the faith of Christ, we cannot doubt that the apostle was true to the Master he loved, and was in earnest to reveal the very soul of the new doctrine. But the gospel, for that day and that audience, took this form in his hands: "he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," till Felix trembled and said, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."<sup>1</sup> Before Agrippa the king, in like manner, nothing falls from the lips of Paul which approaches the standard of scholastic theology. After relating his own conversion to Christianity, and the change of his whole life consequent upon it, he maintains Christ's Messiahship and shows Jesus to be none other "than that which the prophets and Moses did say should come;" and with such effect did he thus exalt his Lord, that Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."<sup>2</sup>

We turn back to the only passage in the Acts bearing on the subject of discussion, which has been omitted in this rapid survey. That passage has been reserved to the last, because it seems to be the most distinct and explicit of all that are found in this book. It is in chapter xvi., verses 30, 31. The scene is

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiv. 24, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxvi. 22, 28.



Philippi, and the public jail of the city ; the time is midnight. We say nothing of the prayers of Paul and his companion, or of their hymn of praise, rising with strange, mysterious effect at that silent hour, and in a place used to far other sounds ; we say nothing of the earthquake, the opening of the prison doors, or of the terror of the jailor when he imagined that his prisoners had fled. But when Paul called out, " Do thyself no harm, for we are all here," it was not the sudden escape from a great peril—though had the prisoners fled his life would certainly have been taken—it was not this only, or chiefly which affected the jailor ; but the eager kindness of a man whom he had treated with brutal cruelty, produced in him a revulsion of feeling, thoroughly overpowering. " He called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas." As in the flash of a moment, his whole life was revealed to him, his savage nature, and all his crimes, and he cried, " Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

There are two radical mistakes, easily and often made in the interpretation of these simple, glorious words. They are true, true always, everywhere, and for every human being. To trust in incarnate, redeeming love is salvation. But on the one hand, it

is imagined that this believing is the act of a moment or of an hour, a completed act ; repeated indeed, but completed at the time. On the other hand, it is imagined that the salvation resulting is also a completed act, an act of God, done at once, and for ever, in the moment of believing. You shall say to a sinful, impenitent human being, God has made a perfect atonement in the sacrifice of Christ, for all your sins, past, present, and to come, and He requires nothing more than that you simply believe this fact. Believe it, and in that moment you are perfectly and for ever pardoned, and accepted as perfectly righteous in the sight of God, because he counts all your sins as laid upon Christ, and Christ's perfect righteousness as laid upon you and covering you. We are not now to argue this point, which has been done already in the earlier chapters, but we seek to place beside this involved and complex exposition of the inspired words, another sense, which seems more natural and more true to the facts of Christian experience.

In general, let it be stated that the believing on the part of man, and the saving on the part of God, are not, and never are, merely acts, but processes,—always processes, and never completed till the last moment of life. There is a beginning of believing, a first act of believing, if you will,—a very feeble, very imperfect act of a mind that sees and knows

very little, and has yet great ignorance, great prejudice, great error to overcome ; many struggles, many fears, and much bitter experience to pass through,—but the first genuine act carries in its bosom the seed of its necessary perpetuation and aftergrowth, so that it is essentially of the nature of a process—a constantly cumulative and corrective process. There is also a beginning of salvation,—a very small beginning it always is, and must be. Evil in the soul is deep and strongly rooted. The root is struck, but it will not die soon or easily. The soul has to endure a long conflict, and only with the last cruel wrench of life shall it be delivered. But the salvation is begun, and the beginning of believing is the beginning of salvation. The first trustful look towards God in Christ, towards God reconciling us to Himself by Christ Jesus, is a mortal blow to sin in the heart. And the more intense, the more fixed, and the more loving that look becomes, ever the more saving, the more redemptive, because the more destructive of sin, is the effect. That rude and ignorant jailor whom Paul addressed, was suddenly convinced ; connecting what he had before heard or seen of his prisoners with what he had himself experienced, he was convinced that Paul and Silas were men of God somehow, and must be able, if any on earth were, to guide him to truth, and peace, and salvation. “ Believe in the

Lord Jesus Christ," said Paul; "He is the way and the truth and the life." God is in him reconciling men to Himself, and he, in God's name, proclaims a free forgiveness of sins, and we, as His ambassadors, proclaim it to you,—be not afraid, only believe the love which God has to you, and you shall be saved. You will find, with the first movement of simple trust, a new power, a living power in your nature, putting sin to death, and shedding a holy, sanctifying peace within, such as you never knew.

We close this hasty review with Paul's own memorable sentence, which reveals both the secret of his experience and the spirit of all his teaching,—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me *especially* Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting.”

### SECTION THIRD—THE GOSPELS.

Hostile Criticism—Its Unsound Basis—Sayings and Discourses of Jesus—How Preserved and Transmitted—Christ's Soul, their Fountain—Immeasurable Superiority—To Early Christian Writings—To Noblest Heathen Utterances—Exposition of Passages—No Expiation or Satisfaction—Must have been, if True—Lord's Prayer—Last Supper—Calvary—After Resurrection—Olivet—Christ's Teaching Opposed to Satisfaction—Pharisee and Publican—Prodigal.

THE most precious portion of the New Testament writings, it will hardly be questioned, lies within the four Gospels, and they are also the very portion against which the attacks of hostile criticism have been mainly directed. This is not the place, even if we had the power, to discuss the authenticity or the genuineness of these sacred narratives, but we venture to express the conviction that the mode in which Baur, Strauss, Schwegler, and the school to which they belong, argue respecting the Gospels, is most vicious in principle, and most arbitrary in application. To theorise on the Petrine, Pauline, Ebionitish, Platonic, Gnostic, or Montanistic elements of belief,

floating in Judea, Egypt, or any part of the Roman world in the first and second Christian centuries, and thence, according as these ancient documents are imagined to harmonise with this or that speculative tendency or school of opinion, to determine their authorship and their date, may give scope for the display of great learning and great ingenuity, but is radically unsatisfactory and unsound. The Gospels do not date themselves, and within certain limits their date is an open question, but it is one which cannot be reached by scholarly conjectures, or by ingenious theories, but must rest entirely on historical evidence. Either it is a matter of fact, substantiated or rendered most probable by sufficient testimony, that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are genuine and authentic, and were in existence at such and such a date, or it is not. Obviously, that is the first point before all others to be settled, on its proper grounds. So far as the historical evidence goes, it will appear that about the middle of the second century, four Gospels, and only four, were recognised by the Christian community, as containing authentic accounts of the sayings and the acts, the life and the death, of our blessed Lord. If any one can believe that before this date, that is within a century from the death of Christ, a Gospel professing to be written by an apostle or a disciple, but actually not so written, could be palmed

upon the whole Christian people, then a vast multitude, and accepted by them as genuine, let him believe. After this date such a thing was surely impossible.

The critics of Tübingen are keen-sighted and laborious, in searching out what they deem imperfections, discrepancies, inaccuracies, even contradictions in the Gospels. Their labours certainly tend to disparage in every possible way the only record we possess of a heavenly life on earth, and to silence the only echo of heavenly utterances that yet lingers among men. It may not be—it would be most unjust to assert that it was—with intent, but at least in effect, they foul at its spring-head, that stream, which is life and salvation to the world. The bitter conservatism—the crushing bondage, with the utter loss of free speech, in the region of politics and of civil institutions, under which Germany has so long groaned, has wrought out too heavy a retribution in the only fields which remained open to the galled soul of the nation, those of philosophy and theology. Unrighteous repression in one direction has punished and avenged itself in another, by an extravagance and a wild licence of speculation unsurpassed elsewhere. That German critics in assailing the Gospels are perfectly honest and sincere, we do not for a moment question, and that they have brought to their task unusual learning and laboriousness is palpable

enough. But it is hardly less clear that, however upright in intention, they are thoroughly partial and one-sided in fact. From the first they set out with a preconceived theory—the naturalistic, the mythic, or the philosophic—and their labour is to adjust the Gospels and make them fit in with their favourite theory, dismissing so much as spurious, and discrediting this as a blunder, and that as an interpolation, with the most lawless freedom and the most cool assurance. All the while, most manifestly, a foregone conclusion is in their minds. Honestly they investigate and toil, but it is to mass up real or fancied grounds, on which this foregone conclusion may stand, and they either do not see or laboriously explain away whatever tends to a contrary issue. Dispassionate critics, perfectly open on all sides, they certainly are not, but prepossessed, and, therefore, not impartial. At the same time, it can hardly be questioned that the school even of Paulus, and still more of Baur, has done real and much-needed service. It has contributed to break down, we trust for ever, the old reliance on tradition and ecclesiastical authority, and to reveal the only true ground of an intelligent faith. Let such criticism do its best and its worst, without hindrance. A free press is sufficient for itself to correct its own errors, sufficient also for the protection of all the interests of righteousness and



truth, without vehement anathemas, ecclesiastical, civil, or social.

It falls not within our province here to show how far the findings of hostile criticism have either been set aside or largely modified; but let it be understood, that the sayings and discourses of Jesus are imagined to be the least reliable portion of the Gospels, and that, of these, the least reliable of all are the lengthened discussions and addresses in the Gospel of John. The latter are, with great confidence, asserted to be the product either of John himself, in harmony with what he knew to be the sentiments of his master, or more probably still, of some later disciple of John, familiar with the Ebionitish, Platonic, and Gnostic ideas afloat in the Roman world at the time. The impossibility of any human memory being able to retain, after the lapse of very many years, long successions of thought, and exact statements in words, is appealed to as invincible proof on this point. Of course, anything like supernatural influence is utterly ignored. But we must maintain, even on very general and very palpable grounds, that it is not reason, but unreason, which ignores the inspiration of the Gospels. To take only a humble position, can it be deemed unworthy of God, in a case which involved the highest interests of all future generations, and when, for good or for evil,

so much might be done or left undone,—can it be deemed unworthy of God, by His own living Spirit of truth and love, to have presided over the sacredest work to which human hands were ever put, and to have thus secured, that the result should be such as He deemed wisest and best? To take even lower ground still, the lowest of all, and admitting the faithlessness and feebleness of human memory, it is not hard to conceive how, with perfect naturalness, a trustworthy account of the very utterances of Jesus may have descended to this day.

After the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of their Lord, when the truth at length revealed itself to their minds, that he was no other than God manifest in the flesh, the first and deepest desire of the disciples must have been to recall and preserve all that had fallen from his lips. The great events and acts of his life would not need this care so much; they were prominent and striking, and would not easily or soon be forgotten. But his words, which had impressed and laid hold of them even at the time, and which now were a thousandfold more precious than ever, might escape their memory, and must by all means be secured and treasured up. We can imagine how they would go back in thought to that living, loving voice, to which they had so often listened, and how each would repeat and repeat to

himself many divine sentences, and would strive, time after time, to recall more and yet more, until he was able to reproduce much which he had heard, in the very form in which it had come from the lips of the Master. During that seven days of waiting, which closed with the wonders of Pentecost, it is quite within the range of high probability, that part of the time would be occupied in repeating to one another, so much as each remembered of Christ's sayings, and in carefully comparing and bringing together their several recollections. For some time after the crucifixion, many a meeting of the disciples may have been held for the very purpose of refreshing one another with the words of Jesus, and of extending and amending their various contributions, until at last they could feel morally certain that they were able to present nearly, if not quite in their original form, all, or nearly all, the most important of the divine utterances. And when they went forth to preach in Christ's name could they fail to rehearse what had once touched their own souls so deeply, and on their fellow-disciples not privileged as they had been, and on their converts, what richer boon could they confer, than to repeat a conversation or a discourse of the Master.

It is even perfectly conceivable, and it is natural to think, that long before the Gospels of Matthew, Mark,

Luke, or John were issued, several of the first disciples for their own use, may have committed to writing their recollections of Christ, and that in this way many Christian converts may have been long familiar with the substance, and even the form of what we now possess under the name of Gospels. One step further we advance. In later years, when the necessities not only of a wide-spread and vast Christian community, but of a whole world, to which the glad tidings were commanded to be proclaimed, cried loudly for a faithful testimony, to the life, and death, and work of the Redeemer, and when four evangelists were raised up to meet these necessities, shall it be smiled at as imbecility, or denounced as fanaticism, to believe that these four men in such circumstances, raised up and for such a purpose, each preserving and acting out his own individuality, his own distinctive, intellectual, and moral capabilities and tendencies, were nevertheless all aided, directed, and controlled by a special influence from above. Such imbecility and such fanaticism be ever ours !

Not Jesus but John, they tell us, is the author of the addresses and discourses in the fourth Gospel. But what had John which he had not received ? He was, what communion with the mind and spirit of Jesus had made him—no more ! at best a reflection and a faint reflection of “The light of men.” It

seems infatuated and suicidal. They cannot bring themselves to believe that the Master uttered the words imputed to Him, but they are able to believe that the disciple conceived and put into form ideas, the like of which all heathen and Christian antiquity cannot produce. Who was this John? A divinely-taught man without doubt, and singularly privileged by intimate and endeared fellowship with the Lord. But was he connected with any of the famed schools of philosophy that he should be deemed half Platonist, half Gnostic, with very much of the Ebionite in his nature? Was he at all likely to have known much of ancient speculation, or indirectly to have imbibed its influences? He was a humble fisherman of Galilee first, and afterwards a despised, hard working, suffering apostle of Christianity; but he was a singular and a noble specimen of manhood, nevertheless; and his beautiful idiosyncrasy was most marked. Originally of vehement, passionate nature, he became the apostle of love, and the most gracious human pattern of the divine type. John was the best beloved of all the disciples, and that must mean that his nature had more and deeper points of sympathy with Jesus than any of the others. An impressionable, mystical, etherial spirit, he was drawn more powerfully and nearer than the rest, to the mysterious Saviour of men, and drank in more deeply of his spiritual in-

fluence. Hence, the acts and events of Christ's ministry we have in the other evangelists, but the soul of Christ is revealed chiefly by John.

In a very high sense the Gospels are their own evidence, and of all parts of the Gospels, the conversations, discourses, and sayings of Jesus bear emphatic testimony to themselves. Who could have uttered the heavenly words, if they fell not from the lips of Jesus? Whence could the thoughts, the affections, the soul-experiences, the upward breathings set forth in the Gospels, have come, if not from the soul of Jesus? Where in heathen literature, or in early Christian writings, shall we find a parallel to the sayings and discourses of Christ, for uniform and continuous and sustained simplicity, purity, loftiness, and serene decisiveness, as of a master mind, who was ever above the truth he uttered, not the truth above him. If these be not divine, there is no divine thing in this world,—so profound, so far reaching, so just, so true, so pure, so high, so illuminating and so sanctifying. They touch the soul at its vital centre, and compel it to feel and own the divine. There are no graces of speech, no ingenious turns, no fire of fancy, no richness of imagery, and no wealth of learning, but only genuine, heavenly truth, out of the eternal fountain, flowing gently and unpretentiously from lips of grace, a river clear as

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crystal, a pure river of water of life, for the healing of the nations.

Take the sermon on the mount, the conversation with the woman of Samaria, the story of the death of Lazarus, the parable of the good Samaritan, or of the Pharisee and the publican, or of the prodigal son, or take the discourses and the prayer at the last Supper! Place these by the side of the best Christian writings of the first and second centuries, those of the so-called apostolic fathers, the epistles of Clements Romanus, of Polycarp, of Barnabus, and of Ignatius! How poor, with whatever merit they possess, how weak, how manifestly undivine are we not obliged to feel these are in comparison! Place them again by the side of the noblest remains of ancient heathen religious and moral speculation! Take the sayings of Socrates, the ethics of Seneca, and the meditations of Marcus Aurelius, certainly the simplest, the purest, and the truest of heathen utterances anywhere to be found! It is no candour, but only mere honesty, to admit that there are marvellous beauties, genuine truth, and lofty virtue in these writings, many divine conjectures and anticipations, a cleaving of the darkness sometimes, and a sudden glow of light through the cleft,—all which can be explained only on the ground of a divine teaching. These men, amidst darkness, and falsi-

ties, and vices, were surely taught of God. The Holy Ghost was with them, in their measure, and according to their possibility of receiving his influence. It would be small honour to Judaism, or to Christianity, to imagine that the Spirit of God had for thousands of years deserted the whole world, except an insignificant fraction of it. The earlier Christian disciples were nobly open and generous in their sentiments on this question. Justin Martyr freely and joyously recognised the divine throughout the better portions of heathen writings, and of heathen life. Augustin<sup>1</sup> refers especially to Seneca as most wise and just in his expressed sentiments, though in practice he conformed to the established worship. Lactantius<sup>2</sup> is more than free, almost impassioned in his admiration of Seneca. "How many other things does this heathen speak of God, like one of us." "What could a Christian have spoken more to the purpose in this case than this divine Pagan."

Place by the side of Socrates, and Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, the young carpenter of Galilee—and be it remembered that this at least is no myth; his youth and his social position have no possible relation to Jewish preconceptions and Messianic ideas;

<sup>1</sup> De Civit. Dei, lib. vi., cap. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Div. Instit., lib. vi., cap. 1 and 14.



quite the reverse ;—place this youth, thirty years of age, uneducated, (in the formal sense of the word,) untravelled, unpatronised, unprivileged, by the side of Socrates, and Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius ; place this Jesus, as he stood on the mount, or at the grave of Lazarus, or as he sat wearied and faint by the well of Samaria, or oppressed with an agony of sadness at the last Supper ! I feel as if it were impious to name comparison. What a blending is here of human with divine sympathy, tenderness, and wisdom. What clear, pure utterances ! What quiet, meek, yet dignified decision in dealing with minds and with the truth which they most needed to know ! What simple, elevated, and elevating ideas are suggested to the soul, as he speaks ! We are lifted up unawares into a region of rare and holy thought, such as even Socrates never ascended, we wonder as the divine atmosphere silently envelopes and enwraps us, and we breathe the air, and feel the light, and hear the soft, deep, eternal symphonies of heaven !

Gospel is a marvellously fitting name. Good tidings, God's-spell, the divine story ! “ Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people.” “ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.” In a new, a more

divine, and a more subduing form, Heaven was now to communicate with earth. From the first, the revelation of mercy had been given to the whole world, but it had been buried deep under the Polytheism and the revolting rites of Pagan nations ; and when for a time and for the highest purposes, it was committed as a special trust to the custody of one people, even then it had been barely preserved through means of the isolation, and the inspirations, and the worship of Judea. Once more, therefore, in new circumstances it was to be proclaimed unto all nations, and God was to be seen reconciling men to Himself by the mightiest, the divinest of means. A Being, such as never trod the earth before, was to announce, and by his life, his humiliation, and his death, was to express and to embody God's love to men, and to be the herald of a free, an unconditional and a universal amnesty.

“Thou, child,” said Zacharias, of his son John Baptist, “shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, to go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people, *in the remission of their sins.*”<sup>1</sup> One essential part of the work of the apostles was to publish over the wide earth, in Christ's name, the forgiveness of sins, by a loving though a holy God. Immediately before

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 76, 77.

leaving the earth for his throne in the heavens, the Lord declared to his followers: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance (change of mind) and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."<sup>1</sup> But that which was to be proclaimed so freely had to be gained at immense cost. In a very memorable instance, rebuking the selfishness and ambition of his disciples, Jesus reminded them, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."<sup>2</sup> Simply, but touchingly, the profound and mysterious fact was thus early announced, that human redemption was to cost him his life. Divine wisdom and love found no other means of extirpating sin, and of reconciling and regenerating man's heart, than incarnation, humiliation, and death. This was literally the cost of salvation, the ransom-money paid down for it.

In harmony with this simple, common figure, there lies a beautiful sense in the words of Jesus at the last Supper: "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many, for (in order to) the remission of sins."<sup>3</sup> In like manner, using an ancient and familiar type, the Lord thus sym-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 46, 47.<sup>2</sup> Matt. xx. 28.<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvi. 28.

bolises his own death on the cross: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>1</sup> There was no sacrifice offered to God by the lifting up of the brazen serpent, neither have we to imagine in our Lord a mere repetition of the old symbol; another brazen figure, another serpent, and another pole. The obvious, and the only points of similitude are the exposure to universal observation, and the healing effect that followed. In direct terms, on another occasion, the same idea is conveyed, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."<sup>2</sup> The Crucified One draws, resistlessly attracts, the hearts of men by an invisible power. The force treasured up in his cross is purely a moral, a spiritual force, the force of love, of pure, self-sacrificing love. Hence, immediately after the reference to the serpent in the wilderness, these words follow: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."<sup>3</sup> Love, mere pure love, God's love of a sinful world, is the reigning, the sole idea; but a love at the same time, by which

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 14, 15.<sup>2</sup> John xii. 32.<sup>3</sup> John iii. 16, 17.

as is uniformly shown, the soul of Christ, in mysterious harmony with the Divine Mind, was wholly possessed and ruled.

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. . . . I am the good shepherd, . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep.”<sup>1</sup> The sole idea is love, generous, self-sacrificing love. On the mount of transfiguration, Moses and Elias appeared in glory and “spake of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”<sup>2</sup> We may supplement, if we will, this simple statement, and imagine that the heavenly visitants discoursed of satisfaction to divine justice; but it is fancy, mere fancy, without a shadow of foundation in fact. And it would be at the least as natural, and certainly more in unison with the tone of that world, to which these glorified beings belonged, to conceive that the decease at Jerusalem was to them the overwhelming expression of divine, redeeming love. On the last night of his life amidst darkness and sorrow, the Lord with a tender hand touched the deep principle of his whole work on earth, and said to his disciples, “greater love hath no man than this, that a

<sup>1</sup> John x. 11, 12, 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ix. 31.

man lay down his life for his friends.”<sup>1</sup> We venture to add an inspired apostle’s commentary, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, (enemies,) Christ died for us.”<sup>2</sup> It is still love, only love, which is the sole idea.

The positive evidence to be found in the Gospels, as to the meaning of the death of Christ, is literally exhausted in these quotations, and every passage, we believe, which bears directly, in the most distant degree, on the subject, has been noticed. The doctrine of expiation, or satisfaction, has no place whatever in the words of Christ, or in the statements of the evangelists. But the negative proof, if we may so speak, is yet stronger still, and more abundant.

However we may attempt to account for the absence of any direct statement in the Gospels, there is one ground on which it cannot be put, namely, that Jesus avoided allusion to his own death at all, for this is conspicuously not true. On three separate occasions, at least, it appears that he distinctly intimated to his disciples the certainty of his death, its not distant occurrence, and some of its special circumstances. Immediately after Peter’s avowal of his faith in the Messiahship of his Lord, we read, “from that time

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<sup>1</sup> John xv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 7, 8.

forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”<sup>1</sup> “And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.”<sup>2</sup> “And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up unto Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.”<sup>3</sup> Let us now suppose that the grand purpose of the death which was thus foretold, the one fact which gave it all its meaning, and all its glory, was this, that by means of it Jesus was to make expiation for human sins, and to purchase with this price, from God a free forgiveness for men. For what reason was this not distinctly stated? nay more, why was it wholly concealed? Had it been really true, on what ground of wisdom, of upright dealing, or of mere kindness to the disciples, could it have been kept secret? But it was kept secret; and

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 21.<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvii. 22.<sup>3</sup> Matt. xx. 17-19.

we are compelled to judge that it cannot have been true. All that these confiding followers learned from their Master was this, that he was doomed to death, to crucifixion, and that with his eyes open, deliberately and voluntarily, he was about to sacrifice his life in Jerusalem, and on a cross.

The place which expiatory sacrifice holds in scholastic theology must be fairly understood. It is not simply one of many truths, all equally important, it is the one essential, vital truth, which makes the gospel the gospel, and to believe which is salvation, and to disbelieve which is condemnation. A human being in darkness and trouble is taught to look to Christ, to Christ alone, for salvation. It is well, thoroughly well; but the meaning of the language, as thus employed, requires to be examined. The man is in fear of the anger of God, in fear of an eternal hell, which he sees before him. He deserves God's wrath and curse; and how shall he escape? In this way, and only in this way, according to scholastic theology. There are two distinct points; first of all, Christ, by his death on the cross, has borne the whole punishment of human sin; secondly, the man who believes the revealed fact, and lays hold of Christ as his surety and substitute, is infallibly pardoned and accepted by God, on this ground, but on this ground alone, and no other. If he do not



believe that Christ, by his death on the cross, has satisfied all the claims which justice and law have upon him, and has reconciled a holy God to men, sinful as they are, there can be no salvation. Were he on his deathbed, the question would still be, on what ground do you look for pardon from God? Is it because Christ has satisfied divine justice, and made a full expiation for sin, and on this ground alone, or is it not? If not, there could be no scriptural warrant for hope. The man, in this case, misconceives and dishonours the character of God, and is certainly unsaved. We venture to declare, with confidence, that no such teaching as this, nor even the faintest semblance of it, was ever heard by a single human being from the lips of the Redeemer. This doctrine must either not be essential and not even important, or the great Saviour, knowing it to be essential, or at the least important, for some inscrutable reasons concealed it, and suffered the multitudes whom he addressed to perish in complete ignorance of it.

The doctrine of reserve and of gradual progress in divine revelation, true and just within certain limits, we shall find singularly incapable of application in this instance. The tree reveals a long and slow history of growth. The seed does not start in a night into the form and verdure and beauty of the flower

or the plant. The star was once a nebulous speck, and only by successive attractions and accretions, through a thousand cycles, has reached its consistency, magnitude, and figure. The sun, at its rising, does not rush forthwith to the summit of the sky. There is a day-star, a dawn, a gradual ascent, till the meridian is reached, and the full flood of light is poured down on the earth. A wise teacher begins with the simplest elements of knowledge, and only as the mind of the disciple opens, and his powers are strengthened by exercise, he advances by slow degrees to impart higher, and still higher truth. No one doubts that, in divine revelation, there are an increasing clearness and fulness as the ages rolled on, and as one piece after another of inspired writing was given to the world. The New Testament is an immense advance on the Old Testament. But there was the plainest reason, indeed, an absolute necessity, in this. It was not that God loved to keep back His truth—to reveal so much at one time, and so much more at another,—loved this method for itself. No, never, in any wise. The condition and the capabilities of mankind, and the highest interests of truth itself, formed always the ground of limitation. As the world was able to bear and to appreciate the light of Heaven, it was shed down, in the divine wisdom and goodness. As the world was prepared

for its reception, truth was announced, and in such wise as should best promote its final and universal diffusion. There was never reserve for mere reserve's sake.

The advance from the Old Testament to the New is manifest and great; but the advance in the New Testament itself, from one portion to another, it would not be easy to discover. One main fact seems to be overlooked, on which the best authorities are agreed, namely, that of the four Gospels, one was probably the very last, and the others at least among the last, pieces of inspiration given to the world. The Gospels, as parts of written revelation, were not earlier, but later, than the Epistles, and, according to the doctrine of progress, they ought to contain the more ample disclosures. Perhaps they do. They are remarkable, not for reticence, but for transparency and breadth of statement. Our blessed Lord showed no reserve in dealing with the age in which he appeared, and with its most honoured names, their hypocrisy, their cruelty, their vices; no reserve as to the Fatherhood and the infinite perfections of God, as to the human soul, the future state, true religion in the heart, true worship, or as to the free forgiveness of sins. Not to his own disciples only, but to others, individuals and assemblies, to scribes and Pharisees and rulers, he announced his own

Incarnation in the freest language. "Before Abraham was, I am." And from his disciples at least, he did not conceal even his death and his cross. But not a word did he utter of satisfaction to divine justice.

It is alleged that until Christ had actually died, and until the sacrifice for sin had actually been offered up to God, salvation, on this ground, could not properly have been published, and that therefore it was left to the apostles to unfold what the peculiar circumstances rendered it unsafe and unwise to announce at an earlier period. It is very difficult to imagine, though the thing is so often and so confidently declared, in what way a want of wisdom could have been shown by an earlier announcement, or what possible danger could have been created by it. Our Lord announced his death, why not its purpose, if it had such a purpose? Why not tell of pardon through a sacrifice yet to be offered up? If, as is believed by many, the ancient sacrifices were in any sense expiatory, or if, though not themselves expiatory, they were meant to teach expiation, and even designed to prefigure and point to one great expiatory sacrifice for sins, at the fulness of the times, where had been the hazard in our Lord connecting this existing belief, in plain terms, with his own life and death? On the contrary, what could have been more simple, more easy, more natural, than for him

to have stated the fact? Had it been true, what could have been more inevitable than that he must have stated it again and again? But he never did. There is more than this. If salvation depend upon our understanding and believing the judicial ground of forgiveness; if, without this, we dishonour God and endanger our souls, then, in omitting this from his personal teaching, Jesus was risking the eternal life of those whom he addressed, and leaving them to perish. But he does omit it, uniformly, invariably he omits it. There is not only not one clear, full statement of it from his lips, but it is not even hinted at. In his more public addresses, in his more private interviews with his disciples, or with single individuals, it is not once hinted at, not hinted at even on certain marked occasions by and by to be noticed, when, had it been true, it must have been announced unmistakably, and with all the solemn earnestness of a holy and loving nature.

The beginning of Christ's earthly ministry is thus described, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel (the good tidings) of the kingdom (the reign) of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom (reign) of God is at hand: repent ye, (change your mind,) and believe the gospel,"<sup>1</sup> (the good tidings.) More briefly still, another evangelist

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 14, 15.

writes, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of God is at hand"<sup>1</sup>—change your mind, for the reign of God is at hand. A state of things of which they had as yet no idea, which indeed was in the face of all their preconceptions, was about to commence; not an outward kingdom at all, but an inward reign, a reign of God, that is, a reign of righteousness and purity and truth and love in the soul. Far other views, other sentiments, and another spirit than now possessed them, must rule their hearts, if that reign were to be set up within them. Repent ye, change your minds.

The scene of the first public and formal exercise of Christ's ministry was a mountain in Galilee. A vast multitude was before him, and in the hearing of thousands he uttered that sermon whose divine comprehensiveness, spirituality, simplicity, and heavenly, holy tone it were vain to attempt to characterise.<sup>2</sup> Some of its short sentences few can hear without a sudden rising of the heart, in which veneration and wonder blend with a subduing thankfulness and joy. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." But

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 3, and onwards.

in this divine sermon, from beginning to end, there is not a word, not a hint, not a breath of what in those days would alone be called *the* gospel. Our Master either did not believe in satisfaction to justice for the sins of men, or he certainly lost one of the grandest opportunities ever presented to him of proclaiming it.

Not long after the commencement of his personal ministry, Jesus sent out the twelve disciples and at a later period the seventy, two and two together, to traverse Judea, and to announce everywhere the coming reign of God. In the lengthened and minute and faithful instructions which he addressed to them before they entered on their mission, there is not even a passing allusion to expiation, as the ground of divine forgiveness. And they, when in obedience to his command they went forth on their heavenly errand, what did they announce? Here is the brief record, "they went out and preached that men should repent"<sup>1</sup>—should change their minds. We may connect this early trust committed to the disciples, with the last charge given to them by their Master, immediately before his departure from this world, and when they were thenceforth left to represent and interpret his thoughts and purposes towards men. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,

<sup>1</sup> Mark vi. 12.

baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>1</sup> Not a word even here at the final parting between Master and disciples, of expiation, as if this were the one embodiment of redeeming love.

On two occasions at least, Jesus assumed in the presence of men the highest prerogative of God. Once, announcing the pure, free mercy of Heaven, he said to the sick of the palsy, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee;” and when the scribes charged him with blasphemy, saying, Who can forgive sins but God only? he replied by a question, “Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine own house.”<sup>2</sup> On another occasion, in the case of the woman who was a sinner, Jesus assumed the place and the rights of very God. Addressing Simon the Pharisee, at whose table he sat, and pointing to the Magdalene, he said, “Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Mark ii. 5, 7, 9, 11.



loveth little. And he said unto her,"—purely out of that loving heart of his, which ere long bled on the cross, and because he saw in her that self-abasement and dependence which God ever blesses—"thy sins are forgiven."<sup>1</sup>

These are not the only instances in which we learn that it is the reigning spirit within a man which tests and proves his real state before God. The redeeming mercy of Heaven, the dying love of the Saviour, touches and changes the heart, strikes in order at last to kill the evil that is in it, and creates in its stead a humble, unfeigned, and loving spirit. Divine mercy is first, and is the cause of spiritual change, not the change the cause and ground of mercy. But the effect follows necessarily from the cause. If there be no effect, we infer the absence of the cause, and conclude that the relation of the human soul to God must be yet unaltered. Hence we read, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."<sup>2</sup> The unforgiving soul proves itself to be the unforgiven soul. Pardon is not an arbitrary, capricious favour forced on men, will they or will they not; it is ours only if we truly seek it, and that true seeking is incipient faith in the

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii. 47, 48.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vi. 14, 15.

Loving One, it is the child-spirit, the first real return of the heart to God. This truth is revealed with wonderful clearness in our Lord's representation of the final judgment.<sup>1</sup> A line of separation is supposed to be drawn between the good and the bad. On the one side of that line then, are we to find those who have understood how to reconcile divine government, and justice, and law, with divine forgiveness—those who have pled for, and might indeed have demanded acquittal, because Christ had borne the full penalty of their sins, and set them perfectly free from all claims whatever? And on the other side of that line, are we to find those who have either not known or not been able to discover in the New Testament this imagined imputation? Not at all. Not the faintest indication is given of any such thing. Men are tried before God, and their real state is proved by the spirit which is in them, and nothing else. If the holy mercy of God, if redeeming love in Christ, has really touched their nature, and begun to assimilate them to itself, so that in the spirit of unfeigned loving-kindness, it has been in their hearts, even though not in their power, to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked, and to do only good to all; then, but only then, shall the Great Judge say to them, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 31, &c.

kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

In strict harmony with these principles of judgment is the mode in which Jesus tested certain individual characters, who, along with not a little which was good, were nevertheless radically wanting and wrong. What, of all things he looked to, in any case, was the spirit, the pervading, reigning spirit of a man's soul. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in nowise enter therein." A humble, docile, trustful, childlike state of mind is everything in religion—the spring of all the highest good. "And a certain ruler asked him saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"<sup>1</sup> This was an example of a religious inquirer, as we should speak; and now, if ever, the very truth, and above all the most essential truth, would certainly be announced by him who was emphatically sent forth to bear witness to truth. But not a reference is made, even in such a case as this, to what is now proclaimed as the essence of Christianity. Jesus perceived that there was a radical want, a radical evil in the character of this young ruler. Instead of self-surrender and submission to God, he was cherishing at the moment a conscious reserve on one point, and a deep resistance to the highest claims, which

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 17, 18.

was fatal to the whole of his imagined religion. "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Our Lord touches the root of bitterness, reveals this deceived heart to itself, and leaves the revelation to work within with silent force. Perhaps the ruler yielded to the light thus shed on his nature, and to the teaching and striving of God's Spirit within him. We know not; but there can be no salvation without unreserved and entire self-surrender.

On another occasion we read, "A certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"<sup>1</sup> It was a momentous question, though the questioner might be, and probably was, dead to its profound meaning. He little merited a reply, but Jesus was not one, at any time, who if asked for bread would offer a stone. This lawyer had an immortal nature to be saved or lost—that was enough. He had, besides, himself created the occasion for close spiritual dealing, and had expressly invited instruction respecting the method of salvation. Was, then, this singular and precious opportunity lost? lost by one who loved the souls of men, and died for them? It certainly was. If we, in these days, are right in our ideas of the gospel, our Master was certainly wrong. For how does he

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 25-37.

proceed? Again, as in the former example, he touches the core of this man's spirit, and makes it naked to itself. The nature of moral excellence—love of God and love of man—is unfolded, and then follows the parable of the good Samaritan, teaching that, apart from descent, or outward privilege, or creed, it is only when the soul has been divinely reached and assimilated—only when the nature has been subdued to humble, pure, loving-kindness—that it is safe before God, eternally safe. "Go, and do thou likewise," was the command,—not only copying the act, but filled with the spirit of the good Samaritan.

On another occasion still, and under different circumstances, we arrive at the same idea of our Lord's teaching. The case was that of a Roman centurion,<sup>1</sup>—a soldier, a Gentile, a Pagan. That he must have seen and heard Jesus, perhaps repeatedly, before this, seems evident, for another than the spirit of Paganism had already largely entered into his soul, and he was possessed with the settled conviction that Jesus was from above, a messenger of the true God. And when he came, beseeching that his servant might be healed, and when the Master said, "I will come and heal him," he replied, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst

<sup>1</sup> Matt. viii. 7-8, 10-11.

come under my roof, but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed." In these words, and in the tone and look of the man, it was shown beyond doubt that his spirit was deeply reverent, and humble, and trustful. The core of his nature was all right before God, Jesus himself pronounced it all right, and said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," and immediately added these inspiring words, "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

The woman of Samaria<sup>1</sup> was not a Pagan-born, like Cornelius, but, half Jew, half Gentile, her condition was little above that of a heathen. To her, surely, Jesus would at least convey what was essential to salvation. In a lengthened interview, as it seems to have been, there was abundant opportunity of addressing her conscience and her heart, and of so presenting the grounds of pardon, as we speak, that her soul might be saved. Did our Lord embrace the opportunity? Undoubtedly he did not, if the prevailing ideas of the method of salvation be just. Never, perhaps, with more sublime simplicity did the Great Teacher discourse of the very loftiest truths—the nature of God, the nature of worship, and the nature of religion in the human soul—than

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 7-42.

on this very humble occasion, in a lonely place, as he sat wearied and faint by the well of Jacob, and spoke to a single auditor, a poor Samaritan woman. But the astounding fact is, that all the while not a word of, what would now be called by many, the gospel, was uttered—nothing of expiation of sin, and nothing of pardon grounded in expiation. Explain it how we may, this is the fact, and either we on this point are altogether wrong, or our Master is. It must be noted, besides, that when, on the report of the woman, the people of the town came to see and hear for themselves, and were not less affected by the divine words and the divine spirit of Jesus than she had been, they, too, had learned no gospel, no such method of salvation, as is now so widely honoured. All they said was this, “We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” Neither in this nor in any single instance on record, do we find that any human being having heard the words of Jesus, left him declaring that he had learned the doctrine of forgiveness through the expiation of sin.

The Lord’s Prayer<sup>1</sup> is justly regarded with great reverence by those who love the New Testament. All acknowledge readily, however far they be from acting on the acknowledgment, that it is the model

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 9, 13.

of true Christian prayer. That Jesus selected words, either wholly or in part, which were already in use among the Jews in their worship, does not affect the case in the least. The prayer is invested with all his authority, and the words are such as he thought fittest and best, as much so, as if they had been uttered for the first time, and by his lips alone. Short as it is, no one who reverences its Author will believe that anything essential can have been omitted from it. It is provided for the use, not of one nation, or one age, or one class, but of all men, of all classes, and of all times. Any sinful human being, in any part of the earth, has a right to utter it, in order to express his desires to God, and in uttering it, under the guidance of the holy, and wise, and loving Redeemer, he is surely at the least secured against the possibility of leaving out what it is most essential for him, in such an act, to address to the God against whom he has sinned. What, then, does Jesus authorise, encourage, command us to say, when we kneel before God? The question is a very vital one. Are we taught to ask forgiveness, on the ground of expiation, and to think of God as a righteous Judge, whose anger has been appeased by sacrifice, and who will do, for the sake of one who has acted the part of man's friend, what He would not, or could not do for His own blessed



sake, and out of the pure, free love of His own nature? No, by no means. Nothing like this is suggested, or by any possibility involved. The prayer contains a distinct reference to sin; but it is to this effect, and no more, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Two short additional sentences bring the prayer to its amen; and then immediately follow the words, which have been already quoted and explained,—“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.” The reigning spirit within a man is everything. The unforgiving is the unforgiven. But if divine, redeeming love has gained an entrance into the soul, and has begun to assimilate and conquer it, this means that the nature is restored to God, once and for ever. “In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me.”<sup>1</sup>

We pass to the closing scenes of our Lord's life on earth, to the night on which he was betrayed, when his disciples were gathered around him at the Last Supper, and he addressed them in the divinest words ever heard by men. That short section of John's Gospel, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth chap-

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xii. 1.

ters inclusive, contains inspirations so intensely spiritual, so lofty and so pure, as, if they had stood quite alone in the New Testament, would have rendered it priceless to all generations. Who can worthily represent the simple, marvellous openings into regions of heavenly truth, as rare as they are ineffably glorious; or the assuring promises of another Teacher and Comforter, when his own visible presence was withdrawn; or his holy, and far-reaching counsels; or his kindly but faithful warnings of persecution and of coming evil; or his words of courage and comfort; or his gentle, mournful hints of his own departure; or the tender expressions of his sympathy and love? But surely now, at last, if before there had ever been reserve on the most pressing of all subjects, Jesus, by the force of affection, and by the urgency of the circumstances, would be compelled to break through it, and to state plainly and fully the meaning of his own death. But, with the cross close at hand, and full in view, nothing is said, literally nothing, to those whom he tenderly loved, and from whom he was now to be torn away, of that which is supposed to be its true meaning and its chief glory. The supposition must be an entire misapprehension, unless we would charge our Lord with a want of common honesty, and with a disregard of the duties of ordinary friendship. Even in the institution of the holy Supper, when the

occasion was literally thrust upon him, to speak with perfect plainness, we can find no reference to expiation of sin by sacrifice. "This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."<sup>1</sup> In the Gospel of Matthew already quoted, we read—"This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many, for (in order to) the remission of sins." These words announce simple facts, which were soon to stand forth in all their dark significance. Very shortly thereafter, his body was literally given, and his blood was literally shed, for men—literally for men's sins, literally in order to the remission of sins. His death, like his life, was meant for nothing else than to take away sins, not in a legal, fictitious sense, but literally and actually. He died to make a real end of sin. Of all powers on earth, his cross has proved itself the mightiest, in expelling sin out of the heart of man, and out of the world. Hence, in that prayer, which stands forth a glory by itself, even in this highest heaven of inspirations, Jesus, addressing the Father, says—"This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."<sup>2</sup> To know God—to know God *in* Jesus Christ; to see Him, out of His mere, pure

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 19, 20.<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 3.

love, surrendering His Son—giving his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed; to know God as thus drawing and reconciling men to Himself by Christ: this is the destruction of sin in the heart—this is salvation—this is life, eternal life.

Follow the Redeemer to the garden of Gethsemane, thence to the Sanhedrim, with Caiaphas at its head, thence to the judgment hall of Pilate, the Roman governor, and thence to Calvary and the cross! Surely, if it had been in the least degree true that he was making expiation for sin, and satisfying divine justice, some hint, some allusion, which, at the least, might be intelligible to his disciples, would now drop from his lips. We pass to his resurrection, and to his interview with his disciples after that event. Surely all reserve must, at least, then have been laid aside. His death had been accomplished, expiation for sin, as is supposed, had been made, and there could now be no possible cause for concealment or hesitation. He cannot have left his disciples, during these resurrection days, in ignorance of that which was to be the burden of their message to the world. At all events, on the Mount of Olives, when he looked on them for the last time before he ascended to his glory, and they were to be left alone in the world intrusted with his Gospel, some clear, decisive words would

be spoken respecting what is imagined to be the central truth of salvation. But no; if expiation for sin and satisfaction to justice be a doctrine of the New Testament, at least it was never heard by any human being from the lips of our Lord, from the beginning to the close of his ministry on earth.

This is not all. The direct teachings of the gospel are not only wanting in the supposed doctrine—they are diametrically opposed to it. With the examination of only two out of many passages, in support of this position, we close this rapid survey of the Gospels. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican<sup>1</sup> is a simple picture of ritual and of real religion, the religion of outward observance, and the religion of the soul. The Pharisee uses the language—we need not suppose insincerely—of gratitude to God for what he was, and for what he was conscious of having done, but there is no symptom in him either of a sense of sin, or of any need of pardon. Such imperfections and faults as he was conscious of did not trouble or burden him,—at all events, they did not draw him to the footstool of God to beg forgiveness.

On the other hand, the class of publicans were most hateful to the Jews, perhaps often deservedly so, and this publican may have been no better than

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 10.

most of his order. But whatever he may have been formerly, he is so presented to us here, that we are able to judge satisfactorily of what he now was. "Standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes towards heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Not his words only but his look, his tone, his attitude, and his very significant action, all prove that he was in the deepest earnestness, and that he found refuge nowhere but in the pure, free mercy of God. Very humbly, very timidly, he trusts in mercy, God's mercy. But he trusts, and this is the very state of mind which a true sense of mercy always creates, which, above all, Incarnate, dying love creates, and is meant to create. Revealing as it does, a pitying, forgiving God, by this very means it exposes the horrible nature of sin, and generates a profound self-abhorrence. This publican has no plea to put forward, no idea of his sins having been expiated, or of its being possible to expiate them, and no ground whatever, on which to plead for pardon except pure, free mercy; but he does trust in this, tremblingly he trusts in this. It is enough. "I tell you this man went down to his house, justified rather than the other." Justified? we ask—without satisfaction to justice? Without the full execution of the threatened penalty? Without an imputed righteousness to cover his polluted

soul? Yes, verily so. Our blessed Lord says, "justified," that is, rightened, his inner nature set right—"rather than the other." The other was only wrong, all wrong; his spirit, satisfied in itself, was just therefore quite away from God. But the publican was really rightened, his nature was turned right towards God, the fountain of mercy, of pardon, and of all blessing. Wherever a human being truly feels the burden of inward evil, and is penetrated and subdued by the thought of divine love, and trusts in pure, mere mercy, he is justified, rightened before God, and the very highest purpose of the cross, and of the bleeding Lamb that hung upon it, is to create and secure this result.

More touching, more simple, more divine still, is the parable of the Prodigal Son. Where in this heavenly story, is there any single shred or shadow of the complicated, logical plan of justification? Nowhere, absolutely nowhere. The prodigal does nothing, can do nothing, urges no plea grounded on anything in himself, or done, or merited by another; he only feels the baseness, and the folly of his course, and turns his eye homewards and says, "I will arise and go to my father."<sup>1</sup> The old man, grieved and crushed, had waited long, and long in vain, but he waited still, and was only eager to welcome the lost

<sup>1</sup> Luke xv. 18.

one home, and to love him as tenderly as when the child sat on his knee or played at his feet. At last, when he caught sight of his son, in a moment all the father stirred within him, and he ran and fell on the prodigal's neck and kissed him. Such is the tale. But there is a divine reality answering to it more marvellously touching. Our Father in heaven waits and longs for the return of his lost children. The one only thing He asks, is our return. His supreme joy is our return: "This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found." "There is joy in heaven among the angels of God, over one sinner that *repenteth*," that changeth his mind, returneth to God. This may not be a gospel according to human creeds, but it is certainly the gospel according to Christ our Lord and Master.



## CHAPTER XI.

### ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE DOCTRINE OF SATISFACTION.

SECTION FIRST.—FROM THE APOSTOLIC AGE TO THAT OF ANSELM.

SECTION SECOND.—FROM THE AGE OF ANSELM TO THE PRESENT  
TIME.



SECTION FIRST—FROM THE APOSTOLIC AGE TO THAT  
OF ANSELM.

Foundation in Human Nature—Ignorance and Fears—Early Christian Writings—Repeat Language of New Testament—No Independent Statement—Proof Passages—Dr Shedd's Admissions—First Idea, Satisfaction to Satan—Irenæus—Origen—Abuse of Figures, the Original Root of Error—First Explicit Statement—Athanasius—Augustin—Anselm.<sup>1</sup>

THE idea of satisfaction to divine justice unquestionably has its root in human nature, but it is in the ignorance, the false views and the false fears of human nature. That idea could never have been originated, or if originated, could never have been so universally and thoroughly adopted had there not been first of all some deep common ground for it in the soul itself. The universal sense of sin is obviously

<sup>1</sup> See Shedd's "History of Christian Doctrine," Clark, Edinburgh, 1865; "Lehrbuch der Dogmen Geschichte," Hagenbæch, Leipsic, 1857; "Die Christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung," Baur, Tübingen, 1838; and "Christian Literature and Doctrine," Donaldson, London, 1864; a work which, if succeeding volumes maintain the same high character as the first, will be no common treasure to many besides theologians.

the chief element, lying at the very base of the notion. The fancy that eternal like human justice may be defrauded, and must receive its full satisfaction by one means or other, forms an additional element. There is besides the idea, that God is subject as men are to the passion of anger, and last of all there is the thought, that if God's anger is to be appeased and His justice satisfied, it must be in some such way as human passion is quieted and gratified, namely, by punishment—the more effective in proportion as it is severe. It is singularly seldom that any phrases, at all suggestive of this strictly Pagan idea, or which could even harmonise with it, are to be found in the New Testament. The following passages stand all but alone:—"We are saved from wrath through him."<sup>1</sup> "Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come."<sup>2</sup> "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> "Thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."<sup>4</sup> And these passages refer to a literal fact of the most solemn import. The penalty which sin insures, and insures necessarily, is a standing proof of the abhorrence with which God regards it, and that penalty, if sin abide in the nature,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 9.<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. i. 10.<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. v. 9.<sup>4</sup> Rom. ii. 5.

is not limited to the present existence, but certainly extends to the life beyond the grave. There is wrath to come, and on one side, the salvation which is through Christ, is deliverance from the wrath to come. We need to know it, and to feel deeply all the awakening force of the fact.

But the constant, the pervading representations of the New Testament are quite of another character. The writers dwell on the love of God in the death of Christ, and nothing else. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."<sup>1</sup> "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."<sup>2</sup> "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."<sup>3</sup> "We love him because he first loved us."<sup>4</sup> "Herein God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."<sup>5</sup> "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>6</sup> What we learn from the New Testament with very unusual distinctness is this, that God's love to men, and His holy purpose to destroy evil within them, were such that He incarnated

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 16.<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 10.<sup>3</sup> 1 John iii. 1.<sup>4</sup> 1 John iv. 19.<sup>5</sup> Rom. v. 8.<sup>6</sup> John iii. 16.

Himself in the holy Saviour, and that the Incarnate, in perfect harmony with the divine thought, was ready to do and to endure anything and everything involved in his earthly mission, in order to instruct, convince, subdue, and conquer the obdurate heart of man. "He loved us and gave himself for us."

Such was the divine method. But the darkened, guilty, and terror-stricken mind longs for something more definite, more exact, more judicially, commercially final, something more like the satisfaction which an angry and outraged fellow-creature would demand. This is human nature, but it is human nature imagining God to be like itself, and only capable of being influenced as itself is influenced, it is human nature in its blindness, in its dishonouring and low conceptions of the Most High, and in its degrading fears. And this, it is quite conceivable, though unsupported by any ascertained facts, might, more or less, diffuse itself, during the course of the Mosaic economy. And it is at least quite as much within the range of probability and quite as natural, that after the death of Christ, and when the language and the symbols of Judaism were applied to the cross, there might be a latent tendency from the first among the Pagan and even the Jewish converts, to adulterate the simplicity and the pure graciousness and love of the gospel. It had been nothing wonder-

ful, but only in accordance with very common experience, if almost in the life-time of the apostles, or very soon after their death, the infection of Pagan thought and Pagan feeling had begun to corrupt the divine redemption. We can only marvel that it did not, and that it took several centuries before the corruption at all established itself.

The early Christian writings following those of the New Testament, up to about the middle of the third century, are comparatively few. The shepherd of Hermas,<sup>1</sup> the epistles of Clemens Romanus,<sup>1</sup> of Barnabas,<sup>1</sup> of Polycarp,<sup>1</sup> and of Ignatius,<sup>1</sup> the five books of Irenæus,<sup>2</sup> the epistle to Diognetus,<sup>3</sup> and the pieces of Athenagoras,<sup>4</sup> Theophilus,<sup>5</sup> Justin Martyr,<sup>6</sup> Tatian,<sup>7</sup> Tertullian,<sup>8</sup> and Minucius Felix,<sup>9</sup> make up nearly all the extant Christian literature, within the period indicated. It is beyond our sphere to pronounce on either the correct date of the writings, or their true authorship. Both are, in several instances, matters of uncertainty, and cannot be determined here. Not

<sup>1</sup> *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera* : Dressel, Leipsic, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *S. S. Irenæi, libri quinque* : Harvey, Cambridge, 1857.

<sup>3</sup> *Der Brief an Dognet* : Hollenberg, 1853.

<sup>4</sup> *Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum* : Otto, Jena, 1857.

<sup>5</sup> *Theophili, Libri tres* : Humphrey, Cambridge, 1852.

<sup>6</sup> *S. Justin, Opera* : Otto, Jena, 1842-3.

<sup>7</sup> *Tatian* : Otto, 1852.

<sup>8</sup> *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus* : Migne, Paris, 1844.

<sup>9</sup> *Minucius Felix* : Holden, Cambridge, 1853.

rigid chronology, but pertinence to our subject, guides the arrangement of the quotations introduced.

The testimony of those who immediately followed the apostles of our Lord, and had received the Christian doctrine from their lips, and again the testimony of their direct successors for a hundred years onward, would be invaluable, could it be taken simply as it is, and with perfect impartiality and simplicity. It is vain to imagine this possible, for even the most upright could not, with their utmost efforts, divest themselves of some pre-judgment, prejudice, or bias on one side or other. But thus far all are agreed, that the references to what is now understood as *the gospel*,<sup>1</sup> by early Christian writers, are surprisingly few, and all but always merely in the words of the New Testament, without comment of any kind. So near to the cross as they were, with a perishing world (as we speak) around them, and with a new and precious experience which had entirely changed their Jewish or Pagan life, we should have expected something very different, if the now accepted views of Christ's death had been true. But it is indisputable, that they rarely touch what our modern theology pronounces to be the very core of saving truth.

Perhaps the most pious and spiritual of the primitive Christian remains, and the most apostolic in

<sup>1</sup> Meaning chiefly the doctrine of satisfaction to justice.



phraseology and in form, are the epistles of Clemens Romanus, of Barnabas, of Polycarp, and of Ignatius. The first epistle of Clemens especially reads, in some portions, like an extract from the New Testament, but with this exception, not excluding even Ignatius, there is often a sense of feebleness, almost of insipidity, created in the reading of these letters, which it is difficult to resist. The letter of Clemens to the Corinthian Church is an exception, and is full of wise and holy counsels, of warnings against pride and vain-glory and the spirit of emulation, and of lamentations over the miserable schism which was tearing them in pieces. In order to crush out their bitter jealousies and heart-burnings one against another, and to create a loving mutual forbearance, and a generous yielding to each other's wishes and views, he appeals to the Divine pattern of love and of pure self-sacrifice. "Without love, nothing is well-pleasing to God. . . . Through the love which he bore to us, Christ our Lord gave his blood for us, by the will of God, and his flesh for our flesh, and his soul for our souls,"<sup>1</sup>—in which passage let those who can, imagine expiation of sin or satisfaction to justice,

<sup>1</sup> Δίχα ἀγάπης οὐδέν ἐνάρεστον τῷ Θεῷ . . . διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔσχευ πρὸς ἡμᾶς τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν, ἐν θελήματι Θεοῦ, καὶ τὴν σάρκα ὑπὲρ τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.—Patrum Apostolicorum Opera, Leipsie, 1857; Clem., i. c. 46.

but assuredly it is in them, not in it. The self-sacrifice of pure love is there, nothing else. Again we read, "Let us steadfastly look to the blood of Christ and see how precious it is to God his Father, because being shed for our salvation, it bore [painfully yielded] to the whole world the favour of change of mind. Let us go back to all past generations and learn that, from age to age, the Lord hath afforded place for change of mind to those who wished to turn to Him."<sup>1</sup> One other quotation we introduce, and expressly for the purpose of showing how little dependence ought to be placed on the wisest and best of these early Christian writers, especially in matters of interpretation and of criticism. This same Clemens, probably the companion and disciple of Paul, gives his name to a far-fetched and contemptible conceit. It relates to Rahab the harlot:—"Moreover, they gave to her a sign that she should hang out of her house a scarlet thread, showing thereby that by the blood of the Lord there should be redemption to all who believe and hope in God."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ἀτενίσωμεν εἰς τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἴδωμεν, ὥς ἔστιν τίμιον τῷ Θεῷ, πατρὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν ἐκχυθὲν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ μετανοίας χάριν ὑπηνεγκεν. Ἀνέλθωμεν εἰς τὰς γενεὰς πάσας καὶ καταμάθωμεν ὅτι ἐν γενεᾷ καὶ γενεᾷ μετανοίας τόπον ἔδωκεν ὁ Δεσπότης τοῖς βουλομένοις ἐπιστραφῆναι ἐπ' αὐτόν. — Patrum Apostolicorum Opera, Leipsic, 1857; Clem., i. c. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Καὶ προσεθέντο αὐτῇ δοῦναι σημεῖον ὅπως κρεμάσῃ ἐκ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτῆς κόκκινον· πρόδηλον ποιοῦντες ὅτι διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Κυρίου

Strange to say, even this is surpassed in fancifulness and in absurdity, by a later and a deservedly-admired father. Irenæus says, "So also the harlot Rahab, while condemning herself as a Gentile, guilty of all kinds of sin, did yet receive the three spies who were searching the land, and hid them in her house,—to wit, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> It would not be easy to excel this statement in extravagance or impiety.

The letters ascribed to Barnabas, the companion of Paul, and to Polycarp, the disciple of John, pious in sentiment and in spirit, would attract, and are worthy of little consideration, but for the names which they bear. Even the seven epistles ascribed to Ignatius, the fellow-disciple of Polycarp, though often spiritual and fervid, and, like Clement, apostolical in language and in form, possess no solid value, and are almost devoid of interest, except for their venerable antiquity, and as the utterance of warm affection and of earnest piety. In many parts, besides, they are painfully inflated, fulsomely complimentary

λύτρωσις ἔσται πᾶσι τοῖς πιστεύουσιν καὶ ἐλπίζουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν Θεόν.—  
Idem., c. 7.

<sup>1</sup> Sic autem et Rahab fornica, semetipsam quidem condemnans, quoniam esset gentilis, omnium peccatorum rea, suscepit autem tres speculatores, qui speculabantur universam terram et apud se abscondit, Patrem, scilicet et Filium cum Spiritu Sancto.—S. Irenæi, libros quinque, edidit W. W. Harney, S. T. B., Cambridge, 1857, ii. 224.

to the churches and their bishops, even offensively self-glorifying, and above all, poisoned with a strange ambition, expressing very often a morbid and proud desire on the part of this saint to suffer martyrdom, which he did ere long, with unshaken faith and a true heroism.

Of the shepherd of Hermas, the most singularly opposite judgments have been pronounced. To many it seems poor and feeble from beginning to end, often very questionable in taste, even in moral taste, and with hardly a redeeming quality. Certainly the world would not have lost much had the visions, and commands, and similitudes of Hermas never been heard of.

In the epistle to Diognetus, ascribed to Justin Martyr, but whose authorship and exact age are doubtful, though its very early date is not disputed, we meet with a passage, the very strongest in expression and in tone of any to be found in the post-apostolic writings. "But when the measure of our unrighteousness was filled up, and it had been fully shown that punishment and death awaited us as its reward, and the time had come which God had fore-ordained to show forth His own goodness and power, of what surpassing benevolence was the love of God to man! He did not hate us or cast us off, or remember the evil against us. But He bore long with

us, and gave up His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy for transgressors, him who was without evil for sinners, the just for the unjust, the imperishable for perishing man, the immortal for mortals. For what else but his righteousness could have been a covering for our sins? By whom could we, sinners and ungodly, have been justified, but by the Son of God alone? Oh, the sweet exchange! oh, the unsearchable dispensation! oh, the unlooked-for benefits! To cover the transgressions of many through one righteous man, and by the righteousness of one to justify many sinners!"<sup>1</sup> The rhetorical, almost rhapsodical, character of these sentences is obvious. The author is writing manifestly from a glowing and grateful heart, and from a kindled and excited imagination. Warm with the ravishing thought of Divine love, he repeats, and repeats, and still repeats

<sup>1</sup> Ἐπεὶ δὲ πεπλήρωτο μὲν ἡ ἡμετέρα ἀδικία καὶ τελείως πεφανέρωτο ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς αὐτῆς κόλασις καὶ θάνατος προσεδοκᾶτο, ἦλθε δὲ ὁ καιρὸς δυνάμει Θεοῦ προέθετο λοιπὸν φανερῶσαι τὴν ἐαυτοῦ χρηστότητα καὶ δύναμιν—ὡς τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης φιλανθρωπίας μίαν ἀγάπην τοῦ Θεοῦ—οὐκ ἐμίσησεν ἡμᾶς οὐδὲ ἀπώσατο οὐδὲ ἐμνασικάκησεν ἀλλὰ ἐμακροθύμησεν αὐτὸς τὸν ἴδιον υἱὸν ἀπέδοτο λύτρον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὸν ἅγιον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀνόμων, τὸν ἄκακον ὑπὲρ τῶν κακῶν τὸν δίκαιον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδίκων, τὸν ἄφθαρτον ὑπὲρ τῶν φθαρτῶν τὸν ἀθάνατον ὑπὲρ τῶν θνητῶν. Τί γὰρ ἄλλο τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἡδυνήθη καλύψαι ἢ ἐκείνου δικαιοσύνη ἐν τίνι δικαιοθῆναι δυνατὸν τοὺς ἀνόμους ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀσεβεῖς ἢ ἐν μόνῳ τῷ νίῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ως τῆς γλυκείας ἀνταλλαγῆς, ὡς τῆς ἀνεξιχνίαστου δημιουργίας, ὡς τῶν ἀπροσδοκητῶν ἐνεργειῶν. Ἵνα ἀνομία μὲν πολλῶν ἐνδικαίῳ ἐνὶ κρυβῇ, δικαιοσύνη δὲ ἐνός, πολλοὺς ἀνόμους δικαίωσῃ.—Der Brief an Disquet-Hollenberg, Berlin, 1853; c. 9., s. 17.

one idea. Laying hold of a sacred figure, he does what all do in dealing with figures, he extends and expands it, and conveys by this means a true impression of his feelings, but in words which, if rigidly taken, would suggest what was not true in his thoughts.

From the remaining early Christian writers, we have addresses of various kinds, to individuals, to churches, and to emperors or governors, apologies for Christianity, defences of Christians, short treatises or essays, some of them very effective, but seldom or never accompanied with anything which could now be called *the gospel*. The address of Tatian<sup>1</sup> to the men of Greece, explaining his conversion to Christianity, is an exposition of the folly of idolatry, of the character of the Pagan gods, and of the absurdity of the doctrine of fate, but no gospel. Athenagoras<sup>2</sup> has an essay on the resurrection of the dead body, which would compare not unfavourably with many a modern treatise on the same subject, but no gospel. Theophilus<sup>3</sup> of Antioch writes at great length to Autolycus, a Pagan, argues ably for the being of one God over all, exposes the folly of polytheism and idolatry, discourses loftily of the nature

<sup>1</sup> Oratio ad Graecos: I. C. T. Otto, Jena, 1852.

<sup>2</sup> Corpus Apol. Christian: I. C. T. Otto, Jena, 1857.

<sup>3</sup> Theophili, libri tres: G. G. Humphrey, S. T. B., Cambridge, 1853.

and attributes of the One God, enters largely into questions of antiquity and chronology, and then presents a compendium of the Mosaic account of the creation, the deluge, and the early history of the world; but there is no gospel. Athenagoras,<sup>1</sup> addressing "Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, the conquerors of Armenia, and, what is greatest of all, philosophers," executes an elaborate defence of the Christians, from the principal charges which were then brought against them. One of these charges was to this effect, that the followers of Jesus did not, like all other nations of the then known world, offer sacrifice, as an act of worship. If ever there was a fair opportunity, almost a clear necessity, it was now, for proclaiming the expiation of sin, (had it been true,) by the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. But no such idea is once expressed or hinted at. Something widely different is advanced, and that which is now supposed to be the essence of Christian truth is thoroughly

<sup>1</sup> "Ο τοῦ δὲ τοῦ παντὸς Δημιουργὸς καὶ πατὴρ οὐ δεῖται ἁίματος οὐδὲ κνίσσης οὐδὲ τῆς ἀπο τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ θυμιαμάτων εὐωδίας. . . . Ἀλλὰ θυσία αὐτῷ μεγίστη ἂν γινώσκωμεν . . . ὅταν ἔχοντες τὸν Δημιουργὸν θεὸν συνέχοντα καὶ ἐποπτεύοντα ἐπιστήμῃ καὶ τέχνῃ καθ' ἣν ἅγει τὰ πάντα ἐπαίρωμεν ὅσας χεῖρας αὐτῷ ποίας ἔτι χρεῖαν ἐκατόμβης ἔχει. Τι δέ μοι ὀλοκαυτώσεων ὦν μὴ δεῖται ὁ Θεός; Καίτοι προσφέρειν δέον ἀναίμακτον θυσίαν καὶ τὴν λογικὴν προσάγειν λατρείαν. — Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum, I. C. T. Otto, Jena, 1857, pp. 59, 60.

ignored. "The Father and Creator of the universe wants not blood nor savour [of victims,] nor sweet scent from flowers and from incense. . . . But the best sacrifice to Him is that we should acknowledge Him. . . . When, having before our minds God, the Creator, sustaining and inspecting all things, in the knowledge and skill with which He rules them, we lift up holy hands to Him, what need is there of other hecatombs? Why must we offer holocausts, since God wants them not? We must offer an unbloody sacrifice, and bring to Him a reasonable service." Minucius Felix, a much later writer than any yet named, a Roman lawyer, is the author of an imaginary dialogue between Octavius a Christian, and Cecilius a Pagan. The Pagan fairly represents the philosophical and the popular arguments against Christianity, deals with some of the special Christian tenets, arraigns the ignorance and presumption of Christians, and reprobates the flagitious crimes of which they were commonly accused. Octavius repels the accusation, however common, and shows its improbability and falsehood, explains some of the Christian tenets, but chiefly insists—with the aid of arguments drawn from the old philosophy itself—on the unity of God and the doctrine of providence. The work has some prominent faults, an occasional puerility and triviality, as in its reference to the sign



of the cross, to the agency of demons, and to the gods of the heathen ; but as a whole, it is one of the least objectionable and most excellent of the ancient writings. It is simple and beautiful in conception, ingenious, subtle, and cogent in argument, and most graceful and elegant in execution. But there is no gospel.

Justin Martyr holds a most honourable place in the list of primitive apologists. His writings, excluding several which are supposed by the best authorities to be spurious, are much more extended, if we except Tertullian, than those of any of the post apostolic fathers, and more valuable as the utterance of primitive thought and piety. One is startled, even in them, by puerile and absurd notions, which, however, were shared, more or less, by most of the marked names of that age which have come down to us. Justin shocks modern ideas by his opinions respecting evil spirits, their power over men, and men's power over them, respecting the virtue of the sign of the cross, respecting the transmigration of human souls, and respecting baptism, in which last, however, he is far surpassed by Tertullian in mystical and misleading language. But, as a whole, Justin's writings are intrinsically valuable, pervaded by a deep spirit of piety, and manifestly drawn forth out of a genuine and profound religious experience. His

two apologues contrast favourably with that of Tertullian, as forcible and as just, but far more temperate and Christian in spirit. For our purpose, it is enough to say, that—except quotations from Scripture, and chiefly from the 53d chapter of Isaiah—there is nothing in them bearing on satisfaction to justice—certainly no independent statement, or even allusion to the idea. We have a most interesting detail of the forms of early Christian worship—the reading, the discourse, the prayers, the eucharist of the bread and of the cup, the duty of the deacons to reserve a portion of the sacred feast for those who were absent, the collection for the widows, the fatherless, and the poor. But even here, though it would have been so natural, (had it been true,) and so necessary and fitting, when addressing a heathen emperor and a heathen senate, not a hint escapes that the Christian assembly, which he had described, believed in the expiation of human sin by the death of Christ.

The longest and ablest of Justin's works is his imaginary dialogue with Trypho a Jew. It is an extended argument, in which the once-heathen philosopher proves to the Jew the Messiahship and the Divinity of Jesus Christ; and, as was to be expected, it abounds with quotations from the Old Testament, and especially from the book of Isaiah. There is,

among other things, a long and lucid explanation of the sufferings of Christ as real, in opposition to the Docetae, and as perfectly compatible with his essential divinity. But even here not a hint is given that these sufferings were expiatory and judicial. The following quotations, the strongest in expression which the work contains, must suffice to convey as faithful and complete an impression, as can be gathered, of the tone and the form of the convictions of this accomplished and devout Christian saint:—  
 “Wherefore, if they repent, all who wish can obtain mercy from God, and the Scripture pronounces them blessed, saying, blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin,—that is, that having repented of his sins, he may obtain remission of them from God, but not as you, and some others who resemble you in this particular, deceive yourselves, and say that even if they be sinners, and know God, the Lord will not impute sin to them.”<sup>1</sup> Trypho having asked if unbelieving Jews, who directed their lives by the law of Moses, would be saved, Justin answers, that

<sup>1</sup> ὥστε ἐὰν μετανοήσωσι, πάντες βουλόμενοι τυχεῖν τοῦ παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐλέος δύνανται, καὶ μακαρίους αὐτοὺς ὁ λόγος προλέγει ἐπιών, Μακάριος ὃς οὐ μὴ λογίσσεται κύριος ἁμαρτίαν. Τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν ὡς μετανοήσας ἐπὶ τοῖς ἡμαρτήμασι τῶν ἡμαρτημάτων παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ λάβη ἄφεσιν· ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὡς ὑμεῖς ἀπατᾶτε ἑαυτοὺς καὶ ἄλλοι τινὲς ὑμῖν ὅμοιοι κατὰ τοῦτο, οἱ λέγουσιν ὅτι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ὥσι Θεὸν δὲ γινώσκουσιν, ὃν μὴ λογίσσεται αὐτοῖς κύριος ἁμαρτίαν.—Cap. 141, p. 460.

whatever is naturally good, holy, and just, is commanded by Moses; and then adds, "Since they who did such things as are by nature universally and eternally good, are well pleasing to God, they, through this Christ of ours, shall be saved in the resurrection, equally with their righteous forefathers, Noah, Enoch, Jacob, and others, together with those who acknowledge Christ as the Son of God."<sup>1</sup> Again, "God has, beforehand, declared that all who, through this name, make those sacrifices which Jesus, who is the Christ, commanded,—that is to say, in the eucharist of the bread and of the cup"—certainly no expiatory sacrifice, but a pure act of loving remembrance, of thanksgiving, and of self-surrender—"which are offered in every part of the world by us Christians, are well pleasing to Him. But those sacrifices which are offered by you, and through those priests of yours, He wholly rejects, saying, I will not accept your offerings at your hands."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ἐπεὶ οἱ τὰ καθόλου καὶ φύσει καὶ αἰώνια καλὰ ἐποιοῦν εὐάρεστοί εἰσι τῷ Θεῷ καὶ διὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ τούτου ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ὁμοίως τοῖς προγενομένοις αὐτῶν δίκαιοις, Νῶε, Ἐνὸχ, Ἰακώβ, καὶ εἰ τινες ἄλλοι γεγόνασι, σωθήσονται σὺν τοῖς ἐπιγνοῦσι τὸν χριστὸν τούτον τοῦ Θεοῦ υἱόν. —*Ibid.*, c. 45, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Πάντας οὖν οἱ διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τούτου, θυσίας ὡς παρέδωκεν Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς γίνεσθαι τούτ' ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τῇ εὐχαριστίᾳ τοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ ποτήριου, τὰς ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ τῆς γῆς γινομένας ὑπὸ τῶν χριστιάνων, προλαβὼν ὁ Θεὸς μαρτυρεῖ εὐαρέστους ὑπάρχειν αὐτῷ. Τὰς δὲ ὑφ' ὑμῶν καὶ δι' ἐκ εἰρων ὑμῶν τῶν ἱερέων γινομένας, ἐπανίεται λέγων, τὰς θυσίας ὑμῶν οὐ προσδέξομαι ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν ὑμῶν. —*Ibid.*, c. 117, p. 387.

Again, "That prayers and thanksgivings, offered up by the worthy, are the only sacrifices which are perfect and acceptable to God, is what I myself also affirm; for these alone the Christians have been taught to offer."<sup>1</sup> Again, "The mystery of the lamb, which God commanded you to sacrifice as a passover, was a type of Christ, with whose blood, according to the measure of their faith in him, they who believe anoint their houses, — that is, themselves."<sup>2</sup> Again, Justin places real against ritual cleansing, and shows that nothing but thorough, personal abandonment of evil can avail. It was not surely to the bath, he says, that Isaiah sent you, to wash away sins; but, he adds, "as one would think, there was of old that very washing of salvation which is for those who repent, and who are no longer purified by the blood of goats and sheep, or by the ashes of an heifer, *but by faith*, through the blood and death of Christ, who died for this very purpose."<sup>3</sup> Again, "Through the baptism of repent-

<sup>1</sup> "Οτι μὲν οὖν καὶ εὐχαὶ καὶ εὐχαριστίαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀξίων γινόμεναι τέλειαι μόναι καὶ εὐαρεστοὶ εἰσι τῷ Θεῷ θυσαί καὶ αὐτος φημι. Ταῦτα γὰρ μόναι καὶ χριστιανοὶ παρέλαβον ποιεῖν.—*Ibid.*, c. 117, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> Τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ προβατοῦ ὃ τὸ πάσχα θύειν ἐντέταλται ὃ Θεὸς τύπος ἦν τοῦ Χριστοῦ οὗ τῷ αἵματι κατὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς εἰς αὐτὸν πίστεως χρίονται τοὺς οἴκους ἑαυτῶν, τουτ' ἐστὶν ἑαυτούς, οἱ πιστεύοντες εἰς αὐτόν.—*Ibid.*, c. 40, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> Ἀλλὰ ὡς εἰκὸς πάλαι τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο τὸ σωτήριον λουτρὸν ἦν ὃ εἶπε τὸ τοῖς μεταγινώσκουσι καὶ μηκέτι ἁίμασι τράγων καὶ προβάτων ἢ, σποδῷ

ance, and the knowledge of God, which, as Isaiah says, was instituted for the sins of the people, we have believed and know that the same baptism, which is alone able to cleanse penitents, is the water of life.”<sup>1</sup>

Tertullian is one of the most voluminous of all the early Christian writers, and the least satisfactory. With no little argumentative power, philosophic culture, and natural eloquence, he is intemperate and unguarded, and is wanting in that pervading spirit of piety, which so beautifully distinguishes Justin Martyr. His later writings, when he had embraced the heresy of Montanus, and his polemical pieces, are extravagant in sentiment, and violent in spirit. The titles of some of the former are enough:—“*De Velandis Virginibus, de Pudicitia, de Monogamia, Exhortatio Castitatis,*” &c. We refer here solely to his earlier and better productions, the “*Apologeticus adversus Gentes, ad Martyres, ad Scapulam, ad Uxorem II., de Testimonio Animæ, de Spectaculis, de Idolatria, de Oratione, de Baptismo, de Pœnitentia, de Patientia, de Corona Militis,*” and “*De Præscriptionibus adversus Hereticos.*” Throughout these writings, it is

δαμάλῃως καθαριζόμενοι, ἀλλὰ πίστει διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ὅς διὰ τοῦτο ἀπέθανεν.—*Ibid.*, c. 13, p. 44.

<sup>1</sup> Διὰ τοῦ λουτροῦ οὖν τῆς μετανοίας καὶ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ ὃ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀνομίας τῶν λαῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ γέγονεν ὡς Ἡσαΐας βοᾷ ἡμεῖς ἐπιστεύσαμεν καὶ γνωρίζομεν, ὅτι τουτ’ ἐκείνο ὃ προηγόρευε τὸ βάπτισμα, τὸ μόνον καθαρίσαι τοὺς μετανοήσαντας δυναμένον τουτό ἐστι τὸ ὕδωρ τῆς ζωῆς.—*Ibid.*, c. 14, p. 48.

enough to say that no express statement of the doctrine of satisfaction can be found, and there is less of Scriptural phraseology and quotation, than in any other of the fathers. In the "Apologeticus," one of Tertullian's best productions, and fullest of quotation from the Scriptures, we have a mystical and obscure exposition of the Incarnation, and thereafter of the life and death, and resurrection and ascension of Jesus, but not a word or hint, even here, though it lay so directly in his way (had it been true) of satisfaction for sin. One passage only from the writings of Tertullian we extract, as furnishing some clue to his guiding thoughts. It occurs in the "De Oratione," a commentary on our Lord's prayer. On the petition for forgiveness of sin, Tertullian says,<sup>1</sup> "Prayer for forgiveness is confession, for he that asketh forgiveness confesseth sin. Thus, also, is repentance manifested, acceptable to God, because He willeth this

<sup>1</sup> Exomologesis est petitio veniæ, quia qui petit veniam, delictum confitetur. Sic et penitentia demonstratur acceptabilis Deo, quia vult eum quam mortem peccaturis. Debitum autem in scriptura, delicti figura est quod perinde iudicio debeatur, et ab eo exigatur nec evadet iustitiam exactionis, nisi donetur exactio, sicut illi servo Dominus debitum remisit. Huc enim spectat exemplum parabolæ totius. Nam et quod idem servus, a Domino liberatus, non perinde parciit debitori suo, ac propterea delatus, penes dominum, tortori delegatur ad solvendum novissimum quadrantem, id est, modicum usque debitum, eo competit, quod remittere, nos quoque profiteamur debitoribus nostris.—"Patrologiæ cursus completus." Migne, Paris, 1844. I. 1162, 3.

rather than the death of the sinner. But a debt is in the Scriptures a figure for a sin, because payment is, in like manner, by just sentence due, and by the same demanded, nor can it evade the justice of the demand, unless the demand be remitted, as the Lord forgave that servant the debt. For the example of the whole parable looketh this way. For whereas the same servant, when loosed by his Lord, doth not in like manner spare his own debtor, and being on that account brought before his Lord, is delivered to the tormentor, till he should pay the uttermost farthing, that is, the very least sin, so with this agreeth that we also profess to forgive our debtors."

We have finished our condensed account of the early Christian writings, up to a few years beyond the beginning of the third century. Injustice will certainly be done to them, unless it be understood that most of them make use, though not frequently, of the New Testament language in reference to the death of the Redeemer, and also that in some instances they apply passages of the Old Testament, such as the 53d chapter of Isaiah and the 22d Psalm, to that death. But with this exception, and an occasional expansion or extension of a scriptural figure or image, there is nothing to indicate the doctrine of satisfaction to Divine justice for sin, as not only an article of Christian faith, but the fundamental and essential article.



At the same time, it is fully admitted that the ultimate and real question, after all, goes back to the meaning of the New Testament itself. No one could fairly dispute that if the doctrine of satisfaction be there, it is also in the post-apostolic writings. But if it be wanting there, as we have sought to show that it is, then unquestionably it has no place in them.

It must here be remembered how much, quite away from the disputed doctrine, is taught by those passages in the New Testament which refer to the cross, to human salvation, and to the work of the Redeemer. From these passages, as has been already made out, we learn most assuredly and distinctly: 1st, That the death and the entire earthly course of Jesus originated in love to men, God's love to men, and that they form the most mysterious exhibition of perfectly pure and unprompted graciousness. 2d, That the death and the life of Jesus were literally for sin, on account of sin, and nothing but sin, and were God's last and best means of taking away sin, and rooting it out of the heart of the world. 3d, That the death and the life of Jesus were truly sacrificial—he freely sacrificing himself to the will of God and to the good of men, and God sacrificing His Incarnate Son, in order to conquer the obdurate heart of man. And 4th, That the death and the life of Jesus were,

properly, vicarious ; that is to say, were owing not to any personal, individual causes whatever, but to pure regard for others ; the death was suffered, and the life was lived, wholly and only for men, just as if that death and that life had been a ransom given, a price paid, for human salvation. But the gulf is measureless, between all this and expiation of sin, or satisfaction to justice. We then pass into a totally opposite region, and we have then to import into beautiful and simple words ideas which are not only inconsistent with their natural meaning, but really destructive of it. Imputation ! which no mind can possibly conceive as real, but which every mind is forced to represent as wholly fictitious. Judicial anger ! though what that can be, as different from real anger, it is impossible to understand. The propitiating and atoning of a Being in whose pure love alone, it is admitted, all that has been done originated ! The idea that eternal justice is defrauded, though by the necessity of the moral constitution of things every sin at once inevitably punishes itself ! The farther idea that justice, robbed in one quarter, avenges and satisfies itself in another ! These are some of the fictions of law—such, however, as no human law could suffer—which receive no sanction from the New Testament, but are at variance with every section of it, and most decidedly of all at vari-

ance with every word that fell from our blessed Lord himself. To speak of the sacrificial, the vicarious, the atoning, that is, reconciling and redeeming, (because love-originated and love-originating,) sufferings of Jesus is one thing, but to imagine that these sufferings are in any sense expiatory—that is, that they make amends for sin, appease anger, or satisfy justice—is another and a totally opposite thing, which has no sanction from God's Word, and rests wholly on human authority.

Few can be more convinced than the writer is, that the representation given in these pages of the early Christian literature in its relation to the great truths of Christianity, is likely to be more or less one-sided and influenced, even unconsciously, by pre-judgment or prejudice. But, happily, we are able to confirm to a certain extent, and more than confirm, that representation by the unequivocal judgment of one who entertains convictions in reference to expiation, diametrically opposed to those upheld in this volume, and who is the latest, as he is certainly one of the ablest and most ingenious, defenders of the scholastic theology, Dr Shedd of Andover.<sup>1</sup> Dr Shedd entertains, no doubt, that the early Christian writings involve the received doctrine, and are entirely

<sup>1</sup> "A History of Christian Doctrine," by W. G. T. Shedd, D.D. Clark, Edinburgh, 1865.

consistent with it. He even affirms that "the idea of vicarious satisfaction is distinctly enunciated by them,"<sup>1</sup> though we entirely deny that, apart from the language of the New Testament, he produces one example of such distinct enunciation. Elsewhere he admits, again and again, in the most explicit terms, that this idea is scarcely expressed at all, and if expressed, it is so only, and always, in the very phraseology of the Scriptures. "The apostolic fathers merely repeated the Scripture phraseology which contained the truth, which was warm and vital in their Christian experience, but did not enunciate it in the exact and guarded statements of a scientific formula."<sup>2</sup> "Taken as a whole, the body of Patristic theology exhibits but an imperfect theoretic comprehension of the most fundamental truth in the Christian system."<sup>3</sup> "Examining them (the apostolic fathers) we find chiefly the repetition of Scripture phraseology, without further attempt at an explanatory, doctrinal statement. There is no scientific construction of the doctrine of atonement in the writings of these devout disciples of Paul and John."<sup>4</sup> "All true, scientific development of the doctrine of the atonement, it is very evident, must take its departure from the idea

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 212.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 207.

of divine justice, . . . . In proportion as the mind of the Church obtained a distinct and philosophic conception of this great attribute, as an absolute and necessary principle in the divine nature and in human nature, was it enabled to specify, with distinctness, the real meaning and purport of the Redeemer's passion, and to exhibit the rational and necessary grounds for it."<sup>1</sup> "They (the apostolic fathers) recognised the doctrine of atonement for sin, by the death of the Redeemer, as one taught in the Scriptures, and, especially, in the writings of the two great apostles, Paul and John, at whose feet they had been brought up. They did not, however, venture beyond the phraseology of Scripture, and they attempted no *rationale* of the doctrine. . . . The evangelical tenet was heartily and cordially held in their religious experience, but it was not drawn forth from this, its warm and glowing home, into the cool and clear light of the intellect and of theological science. The relations of this sacrificial death to the justice of God, on the one hand, and to the conscience of man, on the other—the judicial reasons and grounds of this death of the most exalted of personages—were left to be investigated and exhibited in later ages, and by other generations of theologians."<sup>2</sup> "Taking the term 'atonement,' in

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., pp. 216, 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii., pp. 211, 212.

its technical signification, to denote the satisfaction of divine justice for the sin of man, by the substituted penal sufferings of the Son of God, we shall find a slower scientific unfolding of this great cardinal doctrine than of any other of the principal truths of Christianity. Our investigations in this branch of inquiry will disclose the fact, that it was reserved for *the Protestant Church and the modern theological mind* to bring the doctrines of Soteriology to a correspondent degree of expansion.”<sup>1</sup>

I venture to emphasise this closing statement, because I hold it to be incontestably true, and because, if it be true, it is then past all belief that that which took fifteen centuries thoroughly to interpret and unfold, can have lain, all along, as a Divine revelation in the simple language of the New Testament. Still farther, Dr Shedd allows, without qualification, that the doctrine of satisfaction to Divine justice cannot be found in the writings of Origen; and, almost as freely, that it is also wanting, with anything like precision, even in those of Augustin. Of Origen, at least, he expressly asserts that his leading opinions are “incompatible with the doctrine of a satisfaction of Divine justice;”<sup>2</sup> and adds, “that only a very defective and erroneous conception of this cardinal

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<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 236.

truth of Christianity is to be found in the Alexandrian Soteriology.”<sup>1</sup> During the first three centuries, Dr Shedd imagines an effort on the part of the Church, but an unsuccessful effort, to exhibit the truth in a speculative and accurate form. But the success, he thinks, was greater as the ages advanced. “The historical development of the doctrine evinces, as we follow it down the centuries, that a gradual progress, in acquiring a scientific understanding of the Scripture representation, is going on.”<sup>2</sup> “We find, for example, Gregory Nazianzen expressing doubts, and raising inquiries, which indicate that the theological mind was sinking—(what! after 400 years?)—more profoundly into the substance of revelation, and drawing nearer to a correct logical construction of the great doctrine,”<sup>3</sup>—that is to say, the doctrine of satisfaction, as now understood, had certainly not attained its development, towards the end of the fourth Christian century, and was then only drawing nearer to it, than at any previous period. And this we hold to be simply true, though very startling and irrepressibly suggestive.

Dr Shedd has a perfect right to utter his honest impression, that the doctrine of satisfaction was “warm and vital in the Christian experience” of

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

the early writers to whom he refers, and was "recognised by them as one taught in the Scriptures," was "heartily and cordially held in their religious experience," and had "its warm and glowing home" there. But this is an individual impression, and no more—one, too, not unlikely to be created unconsciously by a strong predisposition. Another reader shall rise from a minute and careful and honest examination of the whole of the Christian literature of the first two centuries, with as deep an impression, but directly the opposite—and this, too, in a great degree, owing to a directly opposite mental bias. But apart from mere impressions, however upright, the fact admitted by Dr Shedd is this, that except in the use of Scriptural phraseology, there is not within the range of the early Christian writings, a single explicit independent statement, to the effect that in the death of Christ, satisfaction for human sins was rendered to Divine justice. May we not venture to assert, that this issue must have been impossible, had such a thing been not only true, but the most fundamental and vital truth of Christianity. The occasions presented in these writings, we might say the clamorous necessities arising for announcing the fact, had it been true, and above all, the central truth, were numerous and palpable. It is useless to suggest that the doctrine



awaited development and construction. It certainly did, but the radical idea underlying it was simple enough, and could have been easily expressed. Time might be required so to fashion it, as to make it fit in on all sides to a completed system of theology. But it was easy to announce that Jesus, by his death, had expiated human sins, and satisfied Divine justice, and that in consequence of this, a free pardon was now righteously extended to the chief of sinners. And this was not only easy to announce, but supposing it to be *the one* saving truth of revelation, it was essential that it should be proclaimed aloud, whatever else was left unuttered. Yet it is precisely this, which in a plain, free, and unambiguous statement, is not once to be found in any early Christian writing.

One other remarkable fact deserves to stand by itself. The most ancient symbol of the religion of the New Testament is that called the Apostles' Creed, not actually composed by the apostles, but probably dating from the apostolic age, and drawn up from other earlier forms, in which converts entering the Church were wont to profess their new belief. This symbol contains distinctly the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins; but other ground of forgiveness than the pure mercy of the Holy God—the God who gave His Son to live and to die for

men—it names not, nor hints at. There is an extended confession of the Lord and Saviour in these words, “I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell, the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead,”—but that is all—no more—not a hint of satisfaction, now esteemed the fundamental doctrine of the New Testament. And yet this was the very identical confession of faith, by which Jews and Pagans were admitted into the Christian Church, for at least two or three centuries. Dr Shedd gives a summary of the Christian faith, by Irenæus, and another by Tertullian,<sup>1</sup> portions of which, so far as related to our subject, may here be introduced. They singularly strengthen the impression which the earlier symbol is fitted to create. Irenæus asserts the faith of the Church “in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation, and in the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets announced the dispensations, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resur-

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., pp. 432, 433.

rection from the dead, and the incarnate ascension into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and his reappearance from the heavens, with the glory of the Father." Tertullian comprises all that is essential in these few terms: "The rule of faith is one only, and not to be amended, namely, the belief in one sole omnipotent God, the maker of the world, and in his Son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised from the dead on the third day, received into heaven, seated now on the right hand of the Father, and to come hereafter to judge the living and dead, through the resurrection of the flesh." Where is Divine justice, with its claims to be satisfied? where Divine anger, needing to be appeased? where human sin, calling for expiation? Nowhere. For upwards of two centuries, at least, these ideas were wholly unknown to primitive Christianity. How, then, were they originated?

It is difficult for us in this age to appreciate, with a broad and true sympathy, the condition of Christianity during the first centuries of its existence. Single-handed it had to contend with Paganisms, venerable for their antiquity, and rooted in the habits of thought and of life, in the superstitious fears and in the religious affections of the nations. It had to confront an inveterate Judaism, and it had to meet in argument, as best it could, the Platonic, the

Stoic, the Gnostic, and all the philosophies of the West and of the East. Worst of all, it was distracted, broken up, and sorely scourged by intestine divisions of creed, of worship, and of life ; and these divisions increased in bitterness, and became, as the ages advanced, ever more fundamental in their causes, and more disastrous in their effects. The names of Cerinthus, Marcion, Hermogenes, Montanus, Arius, Sabellius, Pelagius, and others, are connected with a history of discord during the first four Christian centuries, almost, if not quite, without a parallel. And it is never in strife, as even a limited experience is sufficient to discover, that truth comes forth, which, on the contrary, is always the fruit of impartial, patient, and quiet investigation. In all religious controversy, exaggeration, distortion, prejudice, and unfairness are certain to characterise, not one, but both of the contending sides. Truth is never wholly with either at the time, but is always a later result, to which both shall ultimately contribute, though it may be in very unequal proportions. It would be acting in the face of all experience, to accept, as final and just, that determination of any great question which we know to have been reached amidst such raging disputes, rancorous personal animosities, wily ambitions, bitter jealousies, and headlong and unscrupulous passion for victory

as disgraced the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. The fact is not to be gainsayed, that passing down from the apostolic age, there is ever—with some beautiful and noble individual exceptions—less and less confidence to be placed either in the decisions or in the actings of the Christian Church. If, in these pages, we have seemed to attach importance to the Christian writings of the two first centuries, it has not been because the writers were at all better able—quite the reverse—than expositors in the present day correctly to interpret the New Testament, but simply because, since they lived near to the times of the apostles, if a certain idea had been announced by these inspired men, they were the persons most likely to have caught it up, and to have expressed it in their own words. And because they certainly did not so express it, we have concluded that the idea in question was not apostolic, but must have had a far later origin.

Amidst the endless controversies which from the first harassed Christianity, the doctrine of human redemption by Christ and through his cross never was, for at least many centuries, properly the subject of controversy at all. It would seem that the incarnation of the Eternal Logos, the rejection and crucifixion of the Incarnate One, and in both, the infinite love of a Holy God to men, took thorough possession

of the early Church, and rooted itself in the judgment and heart of myriads. There was no dispute among them concerning this. Jews and Pagans alike had come to know and feel that salvation, real inward deliverance, was here, even in Divine, crucified love. Without defining or arguing, they felt within, a contrition, a submission, a trust in God's mercy, and an intense aspiration after purity never known before. The cross meant to them Christ's love, God's love, a holy love, God in Christ reconciling the world, bringing it back to Himself, and to righteousness, and truth, and peace. This was life for death, light for darkness, a force breaking the heart of stone, and sweetly opening their souls, as nothing else had ever done, to the pure influences from above. Up to this point for centuries they were in peace, untroubled by doubt or difference respecting Christ and his cross. They asked no questions. They did not philosophise, far less syllogise or attempt—as in later times was not only attempted, but effected—to work out the problem of salvation by the method of Aristotle and the laws of logic.

At a very early period, indeed, there were some who, following the bent of an imaginative and mystic nature, dwelt unwisely, as many in all the ages up to the present have often done, on the typi-

cal language of Scripture, and who, mistaking fancy for fact, might overpass in some of their expressions the limit of sound reason and of truth. And among the causes which have led to the present wide-spread notions respecting the death of our Lord, the very first, we believe, and not the least powerful because very insidious, was the misuse of typical and metaphorical language. The Redeemer of men, as has been repeatedly shown, is often compared in his death to the ancient sacrifices; his blood is likened to a ransom paid for the deliverance of a captive, and he is sometimes virtually, though never in express terms, represented as the substitute of men. These are Scriptural figures, and in certain easily discovered respects, they convey real truth, but they are figures and only figures of truth, and not themselves truths. The spiritual reality which they embody is not, as has been and is still so often imagined a mere counterpart and no more of the literal image which represents it, but something widely different, though showing distinct points of resemblance, something immeasurably grander, purer, truer, than any possible figure can suggest. It is not hard to trace, in very ancient as in modern times, the evil effects of this misuse and misapplication of figures, and of an allegorical and mystical interpretation of Holy Scripture. We distinctly believe that in

this is to be found the original deadly root, out of which grew up, in the course of centuries, with its many branches, the doctrine of satisfaction for sin.

A careful examination of the early Christian literature shows that the very first, faint mooted of this notion, though the peculiar term was not used in this sense for centuries afterwards, was occasioned by a misapprehension of the Scriptural figure of a ransom for sin. Imagining this to be not a similitude, but a literal fact, believing that an actual ransom had been paid for the deliverance of men, the question arose to whom was the ransom paid. The first answer given to this question was most natural and perfectly unassailable, if the previous thought had been just. The ransom must have been paid to the Being by whom the captives were held in bondage, and out of whose hands they were to be delivered—it must have been paid to Satan, the tempter and vanquisher of the world. The writer who first distinctly put forth this idea is Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp. One passage only, out of many which might be quoted, we shall here introduce, and chiefly for the reason that its meaning has been conceived to be altogether opposed to the notion of a ransom to Satan: “And since the apostate unjustly lorded it over us, and while we belonged of right to Almighty



God, alienated us from Him, contrary to nature, making us his own peculiar disciples, the Logos of God, all-powerful and not failing in his proper justice, dealt righteously even with the apostacy itself, redeeming that which was his own from it, not by force, as he (Satan) had done in the beginning, but by persuasion, as became a God who persuades and does not employ force to gain what He wishes, so that neither what is just might be violated, nor the primitive plan of God be destroyed.”<sup>1</sup>

From this passage Dr Shedd<sup>2</sup> shows clearly that the persuasive influence referred to is employed with man, to determine him to cast off the yoke of Satan. Undoubtedly it is so. Irenæus argues that God did not by force tear the captives from the usurping tyrant, but acted so as that men of their own accord should renounce his service. It was by force,

<sup>1</sup> Lib. v., c. i. 1. “Et quoniam injuste dominabatur nobis, apostasia et cum natura essemus Dei omnipotentis, alienavit nos contra naturam, suos proprios, nos faciens discipulos, potens in omnibus, Dei verbum et non deficiens in sua justitia, juste etiam adversus ipsam conversus est apostasiam, ea quæ sunt sua, redimens ab eo, non cum vi, quemadmodum ille initio, sed secundum suadellam, quemadmodum decebat Deum suadentem et non vim inferentem, accipere quæ vellet, ut neque, quod est justum confringere-tur neque antiqua plasmatio Dei deperiret.”

For further and fuller illustrations of the views of Irenæus, the following passages may be consulted: lib. iii., cc. 18, 19, 23; lib. v., cc. 2, 14, 16, 21, &c., &c.

<sup>2</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., p. 213.

by force of craft and falsehood, that Satan had enslaved the world. But not thus was spiritual deliverance to be achieved. As men of their own free will had surrendered themselves to the usurper, even so their deliverance from his bondage must be not compulsory, but voluntary, an act of their own will. But all the while, it is as true as ever, and as patent as it well can be, that the entire discussion conducted by Irenæus relates wholly and solely to the satisfaction of the claims of Satan on man. Not a word is uttered of meeting the demands of Divine justice, as if that had been defrauded. Whatever idea of reparation, or amends, or compensation is expressed by this ancient father, it is to Satan, not to God, that the amends are made.

It is not doubted that the reigning idea in the writings of Origen, in relation to this subject, is that of a ransom paid to the Evil One for the redemption of men. But Origen ventures far beyond this point, beyond the notion of a compact or bargain between Satan and God, by which the claims of Satan were to be met, and shows indisputably that anything like satisfaction to God's justice had no place in his mind. He distinctly believed in the claims of Satan, who held men in bondage, and that a ransom must of necessity, and as a matter of common equity, be paid to him. But, in the contract which was imagined

to have been entered into, he conceived that the tempter was overreached by infinite wisdom, was the victim of a subtle deception, and was befooled by the very terms to which he had consented. According to Divine arrangement, a man was given into his hands, on whom he was free to exhaust all his temptations, and to exert his utmost power and craft. The agreement was, that if this Being failed, men were for ever to remain in bondage, but if he were unconquered, men were to be forthwith released. The devil in his pride and rage conceived the idea, that if this substitute could be disowned, rejected by those whom he came to rescue, and could be ignominiously cast out of the world, his success would then be certain. But success proved signal defeat. Jesus died, but by his death the world was redeemed.

It is important here, because bearing essentially on the development of doctrine, to note the characteristics and the general condition of visible Christianity about the time of Origen. At the introduction of the Mosaic economy, it seemed good to Divine wisdom, to commit a special revelation of truth to one inconsiderable nation, to separate that nation from all others on the face of the earth, to distinguish it by innumerable peculiar institutions and privileges, and to educate it for a sacred destiny in relation to the rest of mankind. Christianity, on the other

hand, was never national, and was never meant to be so, but was from the first strictly universal, and was thrown utterly defenceless upon the wide world. It was surrendered to all nations, and all times; to men of all characters, and all conditions, without a single protection, or guard, or special help from any quarter, except within itself. It was left perfectly alone, to all the possible hazards of an evil world, and it had to suffer, in common with everything here below, from the weaknesses, and the errors, the depraved tastes, and the bad passions, the enmities and the crimes of men. A Divine Providence was over it, and a Divine Spirit was within it, but it had to take its full share, without stint, of scathe and loss, in the great conflict with darkness, and with the powers of evil, on this earth. What it was in the mind of God, in the soul of Christ, and in the words of the inspired Book, was one thing; what it became in the opinions of men, and in the outward forms in which they represented it, was altogether a different thing. Itself divine, it was hindered and damaged in ten thousand ways, through human folly, human error, and human sin; now robbed of some distinctive glory, and again dishonoured and corrupted by spurious additions. The testimony of the best ecclesiastical historians is to this effect uniformly and decisively, that by the end of the third century,

the simple, spiritual religion of the cross had become, and afterwards more and more became, a huge superstition, purposely and not distantly assimilated to the old idolatries of Greece and Rome. The principle of assimilation, with a view to overcome the hostility of the heathen, was openly avowed and acted upon. Festival days, reverence of images and of holy relics, processions and lustrations, burning of incense, gorgeous robes and vestures, fastings, scourgings, maceration, and asceticism in its extreme forms, celibacy, monastic life, retirement to desert solitudes, veneration of holy places, and above all, of the holy places in and around Jerusalem, pilgrimages to the tombs of the martyrs—these belong to the authentic history of the third and fourth and later centuries, and they involve and incriminate the most honoured names that have come down to us. St Jerome, and Ambrose, and Martin of Tours, and not least of all, Augustin, were the open and ardent defenders of the superstitions of their times.

The high honour in which martyrdom was held seems to have been among the earliest and the most powerful of the causes of degeneracy. To cherish the memory of those who had been faithful unto death, was not only natural, it was simply right and just, and it might have been, under wise guidance, productive of nothing but good. But it proved a

snare and a sin. Martyrdom became an object of desire, because of the posthumous glory which it secured. Multitudes were smitten with the strange ambition to die the martyr's death, in order that they might gain the martyr's crown. In the mercenary and debasing arithmetic of the Church, the martyr was reckoned to have yielded a peculiar satisfaction to the mind of God, over and above what was strictly due, and to have done a work of pious supererogation. The word "satisfaction" in the sense of atoning for sin was never once used, till Anselm many centuries later adopted it; but the satisfactions of the saints, their good deeds beyond the strict requirements of law, are named so early as the time of Tertullian, and ere long became an accepted phraseology. They formed, withal, the first contributions to that imaginary treasury of human merit, over which the Roman Church claims to preside, and on which she based her flagitious system of indulgences.

It is a new illustration and confirmation of what we are seeking to show was the original source of error—the misinterpretation of figurative language. First of all, the phrase, a ransom for sin, was imagined to be not a metaphor but a reality, and the idea of satisfaction to the claims of Satan was the result. Then again, the misleading figure was that of sins, as debts due to God. And they are so, and

may justly be so called in several quite obvious respects. It is a fact that we owe obedience to God, and failing to obey Him, we may be said to be chargeable with an unpaid debt. The language is perfectly intelligible and simple. But it is figure, not fact; it is a legitimate similitude, but no more; and the reality to which it points is immeasurably higher and more sacred than the mere similitude suggests. We have resisted God, and conscience, and reason, and have set our will against God's will. We have wronged God, wronged ourselves, and wronged the whole universe of moral being, in the commission of even a single sin. That is the reality, that is the fact, and no figure, and we descend incalculably when from this we pass to the similitude of a debtor and creditor account between God and His creatures, with works of supererogation on the one side, and penances and inflictions or atonements of any kind on the other side.

Be this as it may, it is evident that from an early period the general idea of yielding satisfaction to the mind of God, though not in the sense of appeasing His anger, but in the sense of awakening His complacency, was familiar to Christian thought. Besides this, even the special idea of satisfaction to justice, though not to Divine justice, but only justice in respect of the claims of Satan, had been freely expressed

and accepted. All the while, in these early centuries, not one Christian writer is found to advocate satisfaction to Divine justice on account of human sin, as if God's justice had been defrauded and dishonoured, and as if it needed and must receive adequate reparation. This dogma waited, for at least three hundred years after the death of Christ, before it was distinctly and unmistakably announced to the world. Athanasius, one of the most imperious, daring, and subtle controversialists of any age, was the very first who expressed the idea with perfect clearness; and he not only expresses it distinctly, but contends for it, though briefly and cursorily, on the very grounds which were afterwards taken with such exhaustive fulness, and with dire effect, by Anselm. One short sentence will be sufficient to confirm this statement: "The first and principal ground of the Logos becoming man was, that the condemnation of the law, by which we are burdened with guilt and eternal punishment, might be removed by the payment of the penalty."<sup>1</sup> This sentence, it is enough to note, does not stand alone, but is one of many scattered passages, all more or less clear and decisive.

Passing on to the age of Augustin, we find especially in his confessions, and in the touching utterances of his religious experience, what plainly

<sup>1</sup> De Incar., c. 11-14, so quoted and translated by Shedd, ii. 243.



involves the idea, though the distinctive term is not employed, of a satisfaction to Divine justice on account of human sin. But this is very far from being persistently upheld, and is associated closely with the notion of satisfaction to the claims of Satan. Dr Shedd admits, "that [by Augustin] the claims of Satan are sometimes recognised in connexion with those of [Divine] justice."<sup>1</sup> And in reference to the earlier Patristic theology as a whole, he confesses freely that, "One characteristic which strikes the attention is the important part which the doctrine of Satan plays in it."<sup>2</sup> Again, he states with great force, basing the statement on what he deems strong and sound reason: "In the writings of the first three centuries, disproportionate attention is bestowed upon the connexion between redemption and the kingdom of darkness, and upon the relation of apostate man to Satan. The attribute of Divine justice ought to have been brought more conspicuously into view by the theologians of this period, and the person and agency of the devil have retired more into the background."<sup>3</sup> Dr Shedd is perfectly entitled to think so, but it is a matter of fact that these early fathers did not. Unquestionably, their views were not those of their critic, but something widely, even essentially different. And

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., pp. 253-4.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

from the time of Augustin to the middle of the eleventh century, the two aspects of satisfaction, as referring to the claims of God or to the claims of Satan—now the one, and now the other, and again both—are set forth by different writers of various authority. But at this period, through the influence of the writings of Anselm, a change of the most essential nature was effected, creating a totally new era in the development of Christian doctrine.

SECTION SECOND—FROM THE AGE OF ANSELM TO THE  
PRESENT TIME.

Athanasius and Anselm—Second, Deeper Source of Error—Pride of Reason—Intellectual Subtlety—False Philosophy—Misapplication of Logic—Anselm's Tractate, Logical, not Philosophical—Conclusion False—Thomas Aquinas—Luther—Secret of his Power—Success of Evangelical Churches—Calvin, Theologian of Reformation—Evangelical Transcendentalism—Essential Relation of Divine to Human—God, Father of Souls—Loving, Redeeming Father.

WE have judged that Athanasius was the first to put forth clearly, and to argue, though in brief and occasional passages, the dogma of satisfaction for sin. There lies in this fact a deeper significance than is at first apparent. No one acquainted with the history of the age in which this extraordinary man lived, and with the part he took in the discussion of those dark questions which were then agitated, can doubt that whatever else he was, as a resolute and expert dialectician he had no superior, scarcely an equal. No problem was so profound, no dogma was so transcendental, as to deter him from

the attempt to subject it to his intellect, and to the laws of ratiocination. A penetrating, dauntless, fiery soul, he quailed not even before the awful mystery of the uncreated essence, the Trinity, the eternal generation of the Logos, and the procession of the Holy Ghost. He was one who would understand, explain, define everything, and master it by force of intellect, and submit it to the laws and the terms of logic.

In connexion with this fact, let it be here borne in mind, as was noted in the previous section, how often Dr Shedd laments, in the first three centuries, "the slow unfolding of the great, cardinal doctrine (as he judges) of Christianity,"<sup>1</sup> and that in the writings of the period there is "no scientific construction of the doctrine of atonement,"<sup>2</sup> that the fathers "attempted no *rationale* of the dogma,"<sup>3</sup> and did not present "the judicial reasons and grounds of the death of the most exalted of personages."<sup>3</sup> He speaks also of the great necessity of "the Church obtaining a distinct and philosophic conception of this great attribute,"<sup>4</sup> (justice,) so as to "exhibit the rational and necessary grounds"<sup>4</sup> for the Redeemer's death. Such phrases as "a true, scientific development of this doctrine,"<sup>4</sup> "a correct, logical construction of the great doctrine,"<sup>5</sup> "a scientific understanding of it,"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

putting it "in the exact and guarded statements of a scientific formula,"<sup>1</sup> are not rare, and give a character to his discussion of the subject which it is scarcely possible to misinterpret.

Deliberately, we mean to maintain that that later application of the forms and the laws of Aristotle to the actings and the words of God, which Dr Shedd so much desiderates, and the want of which in the earlier centuries he bewails so deeply, was one of the worst evils which ever afflicted Christianity, and has entailed an incalculable amount of injury. The primary cause of error was the misinterpretation of metaphorical language, converting similitude into reality, and figure into fact. But a second, and far deeper and more potent cause, was the transference of Divine thoughts and Divine procedure from their own free and wide sphere, and their manifold relations, to the modes and terms of human logic. It is a most significant fact that Athanasius, an accomplished and adventurous dialectician, should have been the first to put forward the dogma of satisfaction in unambiguous words, and to place it on its imagined impregnable ground. It is more significant and suggestive still that this dogma, after 700 years from the time of Athanasius, should have found its greatest champion, and by far its ablest expositor,

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., p. 265.

in Anselm, the vigorous, and, to some extent, the successful antagonist of Abelard and Roscelin, one among the most distinguished leaders of the scholastic philosophy, in an age when it was reaching its highest vigour, and beginning to claim its widest authority, when Aristotle was rising to supremacy, and the magic words "magister ait" were sufficient to silence any disputant.

Anselm is the veritable father and founder of that theology which is adopted, with little modification, by the Protestant Evangelical Churches of Christendom.<sup>1</sup> His "Cur Deus Homo" is the mine from which many later controversialists have dug out their best materials; and it contains, in substance and even in form, all the strongest arguments by which the dogma of satisfaction is defended at this day. The claims of Satan are here entirely set aside; Anselm argues solely for the absolute necessity of a complete satisfaction to the justice of God, and for the first time affixes this sense to the favourite term of artificial theology, "satisfaction." In the briefest possible compass, his argument is this:—Sin is a debt, and *must* be paid. God has been robbed of His due, and as the Infinitely Just One, He cannot suffer the robbery to be unpunished. A less cannot be accepted for a greater satisfaction.

<sup>1</sup> Anselmi Opera Omnia, Migne, 1853, pp. 361–451.

Sin is infinite demerit, and demands an infinite punishment. Only God can satisfy the claims of God ; but also, only man can satisfy for the sin of man. Hence the God-man, and the infinite merit of the sacrifice of the cross !

Anselm's tractate is a finished specimen of the best scholastic productions of the period. With something of their tediousness and pettiness, it is nevertheless full and thorough and exhaustive, and as a piece of logical argumentation, it is invulnerable, if the premises be admitted. But the premises are false ; on the basis of the principles which have been advocated in the earlier portions of this volume, we maintain that they are thoroughly false. The simple fact is, that sin always exacts its own punishment, and always continues, so long as it remains in the soul, to exact its own punishment. And in this fact, the justice which ordains always secures its own satisfaction. But when sin has been punished, and when justice has been satisfied, it seems to have been forgotten by the great logician, or regarded as a fact of no importance, that there remains something still untouched, and it is the only thing which remains, the state of the sinning mind, a state of disregard and resistance to God, a feeling of indifference and of aversion. No punishment, no satisfaction, however stern, can reach this, or make the

slightest amends for it. This is a true debt, which can never be paid, except by the mind itself being changed. The wrong done to our nature, and the wrong done to the justice of the universe, may be met, and are always met, by adequate punishment; but the cruel wrong done to God by the state of our minds, their alienation and their enmity, cannot be atoned for while it remains, and it cannot even be touched, except by one instrument. The only thing possible even for God to do, is to kill enmity by love; to forgive, and to destroy by forgiving, that which is not less cruel to Him than ruinous to us. In this relation the teaching of the Holy Saviour is full of power as of truth. He bids us go to God and say to Him, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Do we forgive our debtors only when the debts are paid, and because they are paid, and if we did so, could forgiveness have any true meaning?

Dr Shedd's admiration of Anselm's work is almost without limit. It is a "remarkable composition, which exhibits a depth, breadth, and vigour of thinking that is not surpassed by any production of the same extent in theological literature, and deserves to be studied and pondered by every Protestant divine. For it is obvious to remark that such a view of the atonement as is here exhibited is



thoroughly biblical and thoroughly Protestant.”<sup>1</sup> “His (Anselm’s) view of the work of Christ agrees substantially with that of the Reformation.”<sup>2</sup> “If his (Anselm’s) views and experience, as exhibited in the ‘Cur Deus Homo,’ could have become those of the Church, of which he was a member and an ornament, the revival of the doctrine of justification by faith in the Lutheran Reformation would not have been needed.”<sup>3</sup> And the foundation of Dr Shedd’s excessive estimate of Anselm’s work is revealed very unambiguously by himself. “So far as the theory of vicarious satisfaction is concerned, this little treatise contains the substance of the reformed doctrine, while, at the same time, it enunciates those philosophical principles which must enter into every scientific construction of this cardinal truth of Christianity.”<sup>4</sup> Again, “Anselm begins and ends with the idea of an *absolute necessity* of an atonement, in order to the redemption of man. Everything is referred to a metaphysical or necessary ground, and hence we have in this theory the first *metaphysique* of the Christian doctrine of atonement.”<sup>5</sup> And again, “Anselm is the first instance in which the theologian plants himself upon the position of philosophy, and challenges, for the doctrine of vicarious

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 274, 275.

satisfaction, both a rational necessity and a scientific rationality. The fundamental position of the 'Cur Deus Homo' is, that the atonement of the Son of God is absolutely or metaphysically necessary, in order to the remission of sin. Anselm concedes, by implication, throughout his work, that if it cannot be made out that the vicarious satisfaction of Divine justice, by the theanthropic sufferings of Jesus Christ, is required by a necessary and immanent attribute of the Divine nature, then a scientific character cannot be vindicated for the doctrine; for nothing that is not metaphysically necessary is scientific."<sup>1</sup>

These high sounding and not measured phrases, applied to the most sacred subject of thought, are very painful and grating. "Enunciation of philosophical principles," "scientific construction of a revealed truth," "metaphysical ground," "the first metaphysique of the Christian doctrine," "the theologian planting himself on the position of philosophy." Where are we, amidst this bewilderment of sounds, very strange to the anxious student of a life and death question of the New Testament; and all this has reference to a date a thousand years later than the death of Christ. Anselm was a man of vigorous and cultivated intellect, and of undoubted piety; but if his discovery and demonstration were

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, vol. ii., p. 275.

not only true, but the essential and saving truth of Christianity, how came they to be delayed for an entire millennium? One is prompted to ask, are we dealing with an early, divine message, communicated for the salvation of the world 1800 years ago, or not rather with a late, human invention? Is it a revelation from God which is before us, a revelation to men, intended to be understood by men, by common men, by all sorts of men, by men everywhere, and in every age? Or is it not much rather an intricate problem which can be solved, a dark, intellectual, enigmatic, sibylline utterance, which can be understood and appreciated, at all events, can be interpreted only by a profound philosopher, or an expert logician?

No enlightened Christian would willingly believe that either philosophy or logic was distinctly at war with any doctrine of revelation. Happily, the tendency, and even the effect of modern discussion, however mischievous and lawless in some directions, have been to establish a deep harmony between the moral constitution of man, the intuitions, and principles, and powers of his higher nature, and the messages and the teachings of the New Testament. And it needs no prophetic eye to foresee that the more simply and reverently that holy record is studied, and the more it is set free from a vicious metaphysics

and an unsound logic, the more surely it will be found to meet the deepest wants, to harmonise with the essential nature, and to awaken the living response of the human spirit, and the more serenely and resistlessly it will vindicate for itself a Divine origin, as a true message from the great Father of all souls. A false philosophy, long dominant, but now rejected by all the best endowed minds of Europe, has given birth to most of the errors of dogmatic theology. Perhaps philosophy, rightly conceived and aided by a sound logic, shall yet be the instrument for correcting these errors, and for guiding honest souls to accept the teachings and the facts of the New Testament, simply as they are, without any attempt to build them up into a system, cemented with untempered mortar, and resting on a foundation of sand.

Philosophy, in its own place, is only noble, elevating, and sanctifying. To descend beneath phenomena to the intelligible principles of which they are the outward form, and by which alone they can be truly understood ; to look with wide, open eye on the vast kingdom of fact and of thought ; to investigate, with patient toil, the relation between these two ; to search, amidst seeming disorder, for an essential harmony of things ; to trace up multiplicity and diversity to an all-embracing unity, and with the profound con-

viction, all the while, of the necessary limitation of our faculties, and the entire assurance that, at the best, it is only an approximation, a distant and partial approximation to truth, which is possible for us, nevertheless; to labour to interpret, up to our measure, the great universe of God—this is among the grandest and the holiest aims of human wisdom. In the widest sense, theology belongs, of right, to such a philosophy, and constitutes its highest and most sacred department. Nothing can be plainer in the history of the ages than that philosophy and theology have acted and reacted most powerfully the one on the other. And if a false philosophy in the past has proved baneful in the sacred region, it may be, that from this very region, good shall be returned for the evil, and the secret of a philosophy such as the noblest human sage never dreamed of, shall be found to lie in the inspirations of a simpler and diviner theology.

Logic, as revealing the laws according to which the processes of thought can alone be accurately conducted, is invaluable for its own proper purpose, but it cannot be too often repeated, that that purpose is never the discovery of new truth. Logic can discover nothing, can never rise higher than its source, or lift us up from the known to the yet unknown. It can only interpret, vindicate, and

support what by other means has been already discovered. It starts from premises which it takes for granted at the outset, and it can bring nothing forth of them which is not already contained in them, and would only stultify itself by an attempt of the kind. It can eliminate, interpret, and defend what is involved in the premises, but nothing more. It would be hard to discover philosophy, in any worthy sense, in the "Cur Deus Homo." Such views of the intelligent universe, as are presented in it, suggest nothing so much as a court-house and a criminal trial, and such views of God, as it contains, would transform the great Father of souls into a stern and punctilious judge, in whom mercy has no place, and whose chief glory is the rigour of His sentences, and the relentless exactitude with which they are executed. The work is pre-eminently logical, but not philosophical, and the logic is faultless, except in that which is most of all essential, its foundation. The argument is logically accurate, and the conclusion is fairly deduced, but the premises being false, the whole process is vitiated, and the conclusion is an aggravated untruth.

We return to the position that the second and the deeper originating cause of the dogma of satisfaction was the application of a false philosophy, and an unsound logic to revealed truth, and to the inter-

pretation of the New Testament. Men could not or would not content themselves with the simple words of Scripture. They must justify these words, must discover not their plain meaning, but their unexpressed secret ground in the mind of God, must arrange them in logical order and put them into the idolised form of the syllogism. The New Testament naturally and ingenuously interpreted was abundantly plain. It proclaimed that God loved the world, the sinful world, was not willing that His children should perish in their separation from Him, but was infinitely ready to receive them, and wanted nothing at their hands, but that they should believe His love, and yield back their hearts to Him. The New Testament proclaimed that, in order to convince men of His holy mercy, God had come near to them, as near as it was possible for Him to come, and had inhabited, possessed, and pervaded a human soul in a human body, and made it his home, in a sense which it is impossible for us to fathom, but of which even our poor conceptions are overwhelming. The New Testament proclaimed that this God-man, Jesus Christ our Lord, came forth as the chosen medium,<sup>1</sup> through which men might be reconciled to God, and was prepared for any amount of sacrifice, involved in a direct connexion of the human with the divine, and as it

<sup>1</sup> See note on page 29.

proved a direct collision between the human and the divine. Purposely concealed, he was not only unknown, but cruelly rejected and despised, and at last in his meek wisdom, his Divine purity, his tenderness and spiritual beauty and grace, he could not be endured, and was ignominiously slain and cast forth. "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world !" not by gaining for men a judicial, nominal acquittal from sins, all whose inherent penal force necessarily remained, but by eradicating the evil principle itself out of their hearts, killing it at its root and casting it forth.

But this was not enough for the great controversialist of the fourth century, and for the chief master of logic in the scholastic age. That tendency to philosophise or rather to syllogise on sacred mysteries, which from the time of Athanasius had struggled to embody and enthrone itself in the Church, at last found its anointed high priest and its final and exhaustive exponent in Anselm. The pride of reason and the passion for logical subtlety had long striven, and at last succeeded in erecting themselves as supreme in the sphere of religious, as of speculative and scientific, truth. God's Word appealed, and always does appeal, to the understanding, it is true ; but men failed to perceive that through the understanding it addressed immediately and chiefly



the moral nature, the consciousness of evil, the sense of need, and the great fountain of spiritual emotion in the heart, which is stirred to its depths, by nothing so much as the conviction of ingratitude, coupled with the thought of Divine patience, and of unprompted, undeserved, unrequited, and abused Divine graciousness. Instead of feeling with their hearts, and taking in to the deepest depths of their moral being, that truth which their intellect had at once perceived, men must explain and reason out what God had not explained, what indeed needed no explanation, and found its perfect solution in the instant experience of the soul itself. Unsatisfied with clear Divine announcements, so clear that he that runs may read and understand them, men must interpret them by a human standard, must find out the hidden principles on which they rest, which God has not revealed, and must prove them to be consistent, honourable, righteous, and altogether worthy, as they judge of the Great Being. These system-builders, who valued nothing which could not be put into the mould of a syllogism, and was not constructed according to the laws of Aristotle, must syllogise on the Divine Redemption. And they did, to the admiration of the schools, but with the direst effect on Christianity. Too speedily they reduced the Divine to the human, and narrowed, and dwarfed, and

crippled God's simple, glorious, unencumbered plan, till that which was high as heaven and broad as eternity, shrank to the measure of a man, and to the paltry proportions of a sum in common arithmetic.

The theory of salvation, boldly sketched with ingenious subtlety by Anselm, admitted of being extensively worked out in many minor details, and its capability in this respect was very early tested and exhibited. Thomas Aquinas, himself a master in logic, a profound theologian, and a man of extraordinary piety, analysed much further than Anselm had done, and subdivided the great work of the Redeemer, and adjusted its separate parts to the separate necessities of man. By him, for the first time, that distinction, now so familiar to theologians, was drawn between the active and passive obedience of Christ. The sufferings of the Saviour, his passive obedience, Aquinas laid down, were the payment to Justice of the debt of sin, whereby men were righteously set free from all its penal consequences. His personal virtues on the other hand, his conformity in his soul and in his life to the perfect will of God, constituted his active obedience, and formed a fund of supererogatory merit, on the ground of which men could be accepted as perfectly righteous, and acquired a just title to heaven. That is to say, in

addition to the imputation of human sin to Christ, which was embodied in the theory of Anselm, a totally new dogma was now inculcated for the first time, that of the imputation of Christ's personal righteousness to sinful men.

It would be tedious and of little practical value to detail the innumerable questions and discussions that arose out of the dogma of satisfaction to Divine justice. Suffice it to say, that from its first exposition by Anselm, it was accepted very widely, all but universally, as a fundamental truth. But with its acceptance, the logical passion and the propensity to systematise were by no means quieted. On the contrary, both found abundant scope, even within the limits of this single article of faith;—whether the satisfaction of Christ was in itself absolutely or only relatively necessary; whether this was the only method by which God's purpose of redemption could have been achieved, or whether out of many possible methods this was simply that, which in His sovereign wisdom, God selected; whether the satisfaction to Divine justice was rendered on behalf of all mankind, or only on behalf of the elect; whether the sufferings and death of Christ were a perfect, literal carrying out of the sentence of the Divine law, or not rather a merciful relaxation of its severity; whether they were an exact equivalent for the

eternal punishment of transgressors, or were mercifully accepted by God as an equivalent, though not really such; so also, whether on the ground of the satisfaction rendered by Christ men are justified before God through faith alone, or through an incipient holiness, the work of God's Spirit, or partly through both? These are among the questions which gave rise to endless divisions among Roman Catholics and Protestants alike, and on which much subtlety, much vehemence, and no little erudition and genuine piety were expended to no good purpose, and with no beneficial result.

Luther's crowning peculiarity of belief—the, to him, “*articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*”—was the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And in order to appreciate this peculiarity, to understand truly what he meant by it, and how he had been led up to it, the previous circumstances must be very distinctly brought to mind. The abuses connected with the Popish dogma of indulgences, it is well known—the money-price by which they could be obtained, to any amount, by any person, be his character what it might—the public sale of them, and the plea used at the confessional, that penances enjoined by the priest were cancelled by purchased indulgences. These were the proximate causes which acted on Luther's mind, and eventually led

to the Protestant Reformation. He saw clearly that it was idle to allege that indulgences were no license to sin, and did not release, and were not meant to release, men from the real penal consequences of sin, either here or hereafter, and that they only absolved from the claims of the Church, and from ecclesiastical penalties and censures. He saw clearly that, in effect, and as a matter of fact, practically and really, in the lives of the great mass of the people, indulgences amounted to a full permission to sin, and were universally so considered. Luther had no quarrel at this time with the doctrine of satisfactions, human, minor satisfactions, for sins confessed, satisfactions enjoined by the Church, as befitting tokens and means of penitence. On the contrary, in his mind, this was in harmony with the higher and far more important doctrine maintained by Anselm and Aquinas, and long universally accepted, of one sole satisfaction to Divine justice, for human guilt rendered by Christ on the cross. To this last idea, especially, from his childhood he had been thoroughly trained, and never abandoned it as an essential article of Christian faith. All his accustomed thoughts, and all his habits and modes of judging, had grown up along with it, and would have been wrenched and shocked by its rejection. In connexion with this, it must be

remembered that, as an Augustinian monk, he had accepted the doctrine of salvation by free grace,—nor only so, but after a long and painful course of inward conflict, of distressing soul-experience, this article of belief had become to him a life within. He, for himself, when all else failed, had found the peace of God in this refuge. When, therefore, the question was asked, satisfaction to God? by whom? Luther's answer was instant and profound, "by Christ, by Christ alone." Or, when the farther question was put, "How does Christ's satisfaction become available to us?" the reply was not less assured and prompt, "by faith, by faith alone, without works of any kind, in any sense—by grace, by the free grace of God, not by merit, unless the hand of the beggar can claim merit, which simply accepts an alms."

The free love of God in Christ was the vital, glowing centre of Luther's faith, and the hidden source of success, all through his course, as, always and everywhere, it has been the source of strength and triumph wherever it has been proclaimed. This is the very primitive New Testament of God, its deepest spirit, and its highest meaning. There is power in this, Divine power—power which finds its way to the human heart. This, and not the weak logic or the false reasonings of the Reformers,

but this simple, Divine gospel was welcomed by Europe, touched its population to the core, drew them, in a way they knew not and could not resist, to the cross, and was felt to be at once a healing balm and a cleansing and vivifying spirit. When the Reformers, trained as they had been, applied their mere understanding, their logical faculty, to the Divine redemption, and attempted to make out the *rationale* of it, all their educational tendencies, and all their habits of thought, led them inevitably to the theory of Anselm, and so much the more as it was felt to be, and really was, a tower of strength as against the doctrine of salvation by human merit. But their preachings were widely different from their logical argumentations. It is true, they never sought to conceal what we venture to pronounce their error, when occasion required its utterance. They gloried in it as the very truth of God. But that which was prominent in their popular addresses, and in their innumerable fugitive pieces, that which really moved the multitudes, as it once moved the crowds in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, was redeeming love, the pure redeeming love of God, in Christ Jesus. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Salvation by grace, not by

merit, salvation through faith, not through works, was the motto inscribed on the standard of the Reformation; and by these simple words, and not by their hard logic, or their artificial schemes of thought, the Reformers took possession, in perpetuity, of a large part of Christendom.

On this principle, we interpret the history of the evangelical churches from the Reformation down to this hour. For three hundred years, their course has been often triumphant. If there has been success anywhere in the spread of Christianity, if there has been manifest power, power for highest good, anywhere, it has been in connexion with them. Undeniably, God has been in them and with them, and the Spirit of God has marvellously wrought, through them, for the conversion and moral regeneration of the world. Of what avail, then, it is asked, are arguments, when what they prove is at once set aside by an appeal to irresistible facts? It is a fact that, in the last two or three centuries, the theology of the evangelical churches has been potent for good beyond any other single cause, or combination of causes. What but this, it is asked, has changed the face of entire Europe, has elevated and influenced the masses, and has touched, most deeply and permanently, not only the religious and moral, but the intellectual, social, and political condition? What



but this has founded schools, built hospitals, made provision for the poor, the sick, the friendless, even the reprobate? What but this has stemmed the tide of infidelity, created missions at home and abroad, effected the most marvellous conversions of character and of life, aroused the careless, instructed the ignorant, reclaimed the vicious, comforted the sorrowful, and soothed the dying? Myriads have found true peace in this faith, and have died, rejoicing in the hope of immortality!

No candid person would, for a moment, deny that the evangelical churches, with all their faults, grievous and gross as they may be, have ever exhibited a life, and love, and power, and effectiveness, which contrast painfully with the barrenness, and coldness, and death in other quarters. But all the while, the question, why and how this came to pass, has been only quietly begged, not fairly answered. There is an element of surpassing power in evangelical teaching which we mix up in our thoughts with other and alien causes, but which itself alone is abundantly sufficient to account for all the facts. In despite of all else, the evangelical churches have persistently lifted on high the ever-living truth, "salvation by grace," the free, pure, holy grace of God. Their speculative conceptions have been daringly irreverent, their reasonings have been narrow and false, but their feeling

of the essential spirit of the New Testament has been true, and deep, and right. Even in periods of feverish and dangerous excitement, while much that was wild, and false, and even essentially impious, may have been thundered forth, the grand and chief theme has ever been the love of the cross. It is marvellous, at such times, how the impassioned preacher seems to forget utterly what he imagines he believes to be true in reason—such dogmas as reprobation, and satisfaction to justice, and imputation—and how he breathes out only the deep spirit of the New Testament, dwells on the love of Christ, and beseeches men to be reconciled to God, and not to receive the grace of God in vain. Those who are at all acquainted with the history of religious revivals, well know that the *rationale* of redemption, as it has been proudly called, and the subtle syllogism which demonstrates the justice of God in saving men, are unthought of for the moment, and that only a message of pure mercy from the Holy Father is announced to listening thousands, and with extraordinary effect, often only temporary, but often also permanent and life-giving.

Calvin, far more than Luther, was the theologian of the Reformation. Not that Luther wanted erudition—far otherwise; but he was the ardent, energetic, and indomitable leader of a movement which

he had to command, and whose various fortunes, in the hot conflict of opposing interests and parties, he had to watch and direct. Calvin, a late adherent of the enterprise, a man of acute and penetrating intelligence, richly endowed by nature and highly cultivated, of extensive and varied erudition, an indefatigable student, and most severe, dogmatic, and inflexible in his convictions of what he conceived to be truth and duty,—Calvin occupied a totally different position. His special work was with Protestantism, as a new development of thought, and as a new form of Christian worship and of church order. The last does not concern us here; and in the first, Calvin's office was to gather up the scattered elements and utterances of Protestant thought, and to form them, as he best could, into a compendious unity. A born systematiser, as he may be truly called, a trained and skilled logician, he had to give a name, and a place, and a visible shape, among contending schemes of thought, to Protestant theology. And he did, with consummate ability and with astounding success.

His commentaries, invaluable at the time, and important on several accounts at this day, do not concern us here. His "Institutes" were the original source of his influence while he lived, and are to a great extent the basis of modern evangelical teaching.

It is hardly necessary to say that, as a matter of course, they pronounce very definitely on the eternal decrees of God, election and reprobation; and that they discuss the doctrine of sacrifice, and after the manner of Anselm, that of satisfaction to justice. Two short quotations shall here be introduced, to illustrate the mode and the spirit in which Calvin deals with the most sacred subjects:—"Had Christ been murdered by robbers, or tumultuously sacrificed in a sedition of the mob, his death would have been no kind of satisfaction. But when he was sisted as a criminal, was accused and crushed by witnesses, and condemned to death by a judge, we understand by these tokens that he sustained the character of a wicked criminal."<sup>1</sup> Again, "Nothing had been effected, if Christ had only died a corporeal death, but it was incumbent on him also to feel the severity of divine revenge, in order that he might both ward off wrath and satisfy a righteous sentence. . . . Wherefore, we wonder not if he be said to have descended into hell, since he endured that death

<sup>1</sup> "Si a latronibus, jugulatus fuisset, vel tumultuarie, caesus per seditionem vulgi, in ejusmodi morte, nulla satisfactionis species exstisset. Verum ubi reus ad tribunal sistitur, testimoniis arguitur et premitur, ipsius judicis ore morti addicitur, his documentis, intelligimus, ipsum personam spontis et malefici sustinere."—*Calv., Insti.*, Tholuck, Berlin, 1846, p. 330, lib. ii., cap. 16, sec. 5.

which is inflicted by an angry God on the wicked.”<sup>1</sup> Surely this is horrible and blasphemous enough.

But we cannot righteously judge of any production, or its author, by a few exceptional passages. Taking the work as a whole, and freely admitting its many great excellences, it is nevertheless difficult from itself alone, to account for its prodigious influence at the time, and in successive ages, an influence almost, if not quite, without a parallel in the history of religious literature. Beyond doubt, the work was precisely what was most needed at the time, in order to give unity and energy to Protestantism, as a new faith. None of the men of the time, Beza, Farel, Melancthon, or even Luther himself, were equal to such a production, so comprehensive, compendious, systematic, and logically constructed. Calvin's reputation for marvellous ability for learning, and for finished scholarship, had travelled before him. The Reformation wanted such a man, and when he appeared, welcomed him with enthusiasm, and thanked God for his advent. But there are some historical

<sup>1</sup> “Nihil actum erat, si corporea, tantum, morte, defunctus fuisset Christus, sed operae, simul, pretium erat, ut divinae ultionis severitatem sentiret, quo, et irae ipsius intercederet et satisfaceret justo iudicio. . . . Ergo si ad inferos descendisse dicitur, nihil mirum est, quum eam mortem pertulerit, quae sceleratis ab irato Deo infligitur.”—*Calv. Insti.*, Tholuck, Berlin, 1846, lib. ii., cap. 16, sec. 10.

facts, perhaps little known, certainly little considered, which deserve to be looked at impartially in their bearing on this subject.

Calvin was educated, up to manhood, in (as we should speak) all the superstitions and errors and follies of Popery. At eighteen years of age, he held two small benefices in the Church of France. For three or four years afterwards he devoted himself to the study of law, and at the end of that period returned to divinity. In 1532, in his twenty-third year, he published a commentery on Seneca's two books, "*De Clementia*," and certainly had not then declared himself on the side of the Reformation. In 1536, when he was most probably in his twenty-sixth, certainly not more than his twenty-seventh year, he sent forth the "*Institutio Religionis Christianæ*." Between this original edition and the latest issued in his life-time, there is a great difference, but the original is unaltered to the last, and appears entire, only with extensive additions on many important points. We venture to suggest that it is not specially assuring, to those who would judge of men and things with candour, yet with severe justice, that a very young convert, at most only four years, escaped out of the heart of Romanism, withal a very young man, at most in his twenty-seventh year, who could not certainly have reached a very reliable maturity, or

a very extended experience in any direction, issued a treatise respecting the very loftiest and holiest mysteries, and embracing the entire sphere of theology which was accepted at the time, and has been accepted ever since, by nearly the whole of the evangelical churches, as expressive of their deepest faith.

But far as Calvin and the Reformers ventured in prying into the hidden decrees of God, (impiously too far, as many wise and good men at this day judge,) even this was not the fixed limit. The spirit of unholy curiosity once indulged, grew by what it fed on, and waxed still more bold and irreverent, and found its ultimate and least guarded exposition in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and in the writings of English Puritans, and Scottish Presbyterians. Up to within the last forty or fifty years, this fully developed system was unreservedly maintained by the evangelical churches. It is maintained in all its integrity in several quarters at this day. We are taught to conceive a council of eternity held, and an eternal covenant entered into between the three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—called the covenant of redemption. “The plan was drawn from all eternity, in the council of the Trinity. . . . All hands of the glorious Trinity are at work in this building. The Father chose the

objects of mercy, and gave them to the Son, to be redeemed ; the Son purchased redemption for them ; and the Holy Ghost applies the purchased redemption unto them.”<sup>1</sup> According to eternal predetermination, first of all, a covenant of works was entered into between God and Adam, as the representative of mankind ; but this failing, a covenant of grace was established between God on the one hand, and the elect on the other hand, or rather, Christ the mediator, in the name of the elect. “ By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.”<sup>2</sup> Again, “ The rest of mankind ” (besides the elect) “ God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will . . . to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.”<sup>3</sup>

Let us not forget that the men who consented to these words, and adopted them as their own, were wise and holy and gracious souls, but we must none the less sternly denounce their errors. It would be difficult, by any combination of human terms, to transcend this fancied exposure of the secrets of eternity. Even apart from the blasphemy, which is

<sup>1</sup> Boston on Covenants. Edin. 1798, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Westminster Confession, cap. 3, sec. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 7.



enough to fill the mind with an agony of horror, the whole is pure, mere fiction, without a shred or scrap of foundation in fact. A covenant of works! Where is the document? where the evidence of its existence? A covenant of grace,—a contract or bargain between God and Christ in the elect's name, on certain conditions, and involving certain promises and penalties! Is it possible to attach an idea to it that is not blasphemous? An eternal covenant of redemption, between the persons in the Godhead! Who was privy to it, or who has been faithless enough to betray the secret? A Council of Eternity! What herald convened it, or what meaning can we affix to it that is not inexpressibly degrading? Oh, unhallowed, impious, miserable invention of the human brain, which yet has been accepted as inspiration! If ever the Divine was brought down to the human, it is here. Men in difficulty summon a council of the wisest and the best, and debate and discuss for the removal of the difficulty, and concert extensive plans, and prearrange all the minute details of operation. But is this the Great God?

That wild and daring transcendentalism which, in a greater or less degree, essentially affects evangelical theology at this hour, is not by any means the most fatal evil. The doctrine of satisfaction to Divine justice is immeasurably worse in its moral tendency.

This, in any form, necessitates for its basis that which, though partially true, as a whole is absolutely false. The only, at all events the highest and most widely inclusive, relation in which God stands to men, is conceived to be that of a king, a moral governor to his subjects, or rather that of a judge to criminals standing at his bar. This, beyond all comparison, is the deadliest error. Evangelical teachers admit unqualifiedly that justification, in their sense, is purely a forensic term. It means, and only means, the act of God formally acquitting and pardoning a criminal at His bar.

Nothing can be more true than that we are every moment instantly judged, righteously and impartially judged by God. Nothing can be more true than that the punishment of sin, in the case of every human being, be he classed with the righteous or with the wicked, takes effect in him at once and inevitably. But this has nothing to do with forensic forms and words, nothing to do with a process of law or a criminal trial. We have sought to show<sup>1</sup> that the word "justification," in the New Testament, does not, and never does, mean acquittal or pardon or any judicial act, but is only and wholly the real rightening of the spirit of man, and its voluntary return to God. And the great, the essential, the universal relation in

<sup>1</sup> Chap. vii., p. 167, &c.

which God stands to His rational creatures, is not that of a king or a judge, but that of a father to his children. There are cases in which He may be fitly likened to a human judge or a human king, but there are innumerable cases in which this comparison utterly fails. This is a figure, and only a figure, and of limited and occasional application. God's Fatherhood, on the other hand, is a reality. He *is* a Father, a real Father. At every moment, and in every possible combination of circumstances, this abides a profound and immovable fact, not a figure. The New Testament has consecrated and emblazoned this essential relation between God and men. Perhaps no single word was so often on the lips of our blessed Lord than this, Father—the Father, my Father, our Father in heaven, your Father. Christ our Lord has very affectingly taught us to think of God as our Father, the Father of souls, of all souls. It is confounding and distressing that any who really love the Redeemer, and really reverence his teaching, should labour not to understand and feel how much this relation must embrace, but within how narrow a meaning,—or rather no meaning at all,—it may be compressed.

We adopt the ennobling, Divine utterances of the Saviour of men, in all their fearless breadth of meaning, and put aside as very worthless the fallacious

logic of some evangelical theologians. However men may be, and on some grounds, and for certain purposes they may properly be compared to criminals at a judgment bar, there is another and far wider and deeper truth, that they are children—not may be compared to, but really are children—and that God is their Father, their true Father. This, at all events, was not only Christ's conception, but his favourite and chosen conception, of the essential, universal relation between God and man; that of children, undutiful, rebellious, it is true, but children in the presence of a Holy Father, who pitied, and loved, and yearned over the souls He had made. With what inimitable nature, and beauty, and pathos this is revealed in the parable of the prodigal, cannot be too often remembered. We might have fancied in this story, that perhaps after long years of ingratitude and of abandoned vice on the part of his misguided son, the father's heart must have grown cold and hard. Perhaps the old man was inclined to stand on his dignity, and to require some acknowledgment and reparation before he should make any advance. Perhaps he hesitated to welcome the prodigal at once, and began to fear how it might affect his other children, and his own authority, and the discipline of his family. But no. This is not even human nature, at its best and highest. How much less can it

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be Divine nature! Our Father in heaven has not only waited long for His apostate children, He has sent after them into the far country. He has Himself gone forth to seek them. In the form of the Son of man He has come down among them, in order to touch their hearts, and to startle them into love and life. And now, by the cross and the grace of Jesus, He is intreating the world to be reconciled to Him!



## CONCLUSION.

THE distinctive revelation of the New Testament, the chosen and special teaching of the Master Himself, is the Fatherhood of God, and the child-ship of all souls.

But there are minds peculiarly constituted and conditioned, noble, earnest minds, and of most pure aspirations, who are unable to receive this message, and to whom the Great Being is only an overwhelming mystery. They have pondered so profoundly, so gloomily, so long, and so long in vain, the awful problem of the universe, that they are helplessly perplexed and bewildered. It would be cruel to say that they disbelieve, for they agonise to believe, but they cannot. The unbeginning, unending, unchanging One is to them reality, but a dreadful, an inconceivable reality—mystery, only mystery, unfathomable mystery! The Great Father, let us not question, well knows such souls, has them in His holy keeping, and judges them in His righteousness, His tenderness, and His wisdom, but not as we,

puny, harsh, and rash mortals, often dare to do. The fear which crushes them, all fear, simply as such, is only bad, but their profound reverence, before what they are unable to comprehend, must be redemptive and holy, and it were well if many, whose faith is little wanting in boldness, knew more than they do of godly fear, of reverence, and of awe. But such struggling and burdened natures are few and rare among mankind. The evil of the world is not too profound or too anxious, but too little thought, about the Great Being.

It is not, and cannot be doubted, that multitudes even of enlightened, virtuous, and good men, so esteemed, deliberately exclude God from their common thoughts, on the ground that the idea is too high and too sacred to be entertained, except in rare and select moments. Still greater multitudes pronounce it irreverent and unnatural, even weak and mawkish, perhaps pharisaical and hypocritical, a fit subject for ridicule or indignant scorn, to speak and act as if we cherished the abiding thought of the Great Unseen Presence. With reference to the immense mass of human beings over all the world, it is mournfully true, that God, the Living God, is seldom, if at all, in their thoughts. Practically and virtually, they have no God, and rarely, if ever, bring the idea of God to bear on their lives, and on their



spirit. Is, then, the very foundation of our being a lie? Is the crowning dignity of our nature, before which all other proud distinctions are not to be named, a thing to be ashamed of? Is the highest and sacrest of all truths, the most inspiring and ennobling of all thoughts, to be put aside, concealed and ignored? Is this not worthy of being entertained, or is it of such small importance, and capable of exerting so little influence, that it need give us no concern whether we entertain it or not? These questions throw us back at once on first principles. Is our true parentage, our descent from God, a delusion, a fancy? Are we only waifs of chance, blown hither and thither by the fickle breath of time, resting a while on some stray spot, and again floated away, until we are drawn resistlessly into the mighty eddying vortices of eternity, and lost? But no. If the teaching of the New Testament, if the special teaching of our Divine Lord, be true, nothing can be surer than this, that God is our Father. The human soul is the offspring of the Eternal. The profoundest and the truest of all facts, that which underlies all other facts, is this, that we are in God, and God is in us. Mysteriously, incomprehensibly, but most really, we are akin to God, and are ordained to be, in our spiritual nature, the finite image of the Infinite. The most awful, but the tenderest and closest of all our

relations, is that in which we stand to God. Our whole being at every moment is in Him, and only in Him. Not our visible, animal life only, but our soul-life, our true, eternal life, is in Him, even as the life of the plant is in the ground, out of which, and in which, it grows. Tear up the plant, throw it, with its roots uncovered, on the earth, and it becomes a dead thing, and must inevitably die.

In the deepest sense of all, we cannot be separated from God, essentially, physically, we cannot be separated from God, except by annihilation. Whether we will or no, all our faculties and capacities are in God, wholly God-given, wholly and perpetually God-sustained. But, morally, we are able to cut ourselves off from the fountain of life. It is not simply the fact that we are cut off, but we cut ourselves off—it is our doing, our doing solely—we will it, we put forth effort, successful effort, to this end. The moral relation is one wholly of consciousness, of desire and of purpose, and the fact of moral experience is simply this, that we are able to move away, and be as widely apart from God in thought, in affection, in will, in our modes and grounds of judging, in our mental habits, and in our aims, as if no God existed. So far as concerns us, our thought, our wish, our purpose, there is no God, we have withdrawn ourselves from the eternal ground of our being, and

stand alone; so far as concerns us, the relation to God is disowned, and all the openings and avenues are wilfully closed, through which influence from Him might flow into our nature. We die, morally, spiritually, we die, as necessarily as the upturned plant. False to ourselves, false to the highest Being in the universe, and false to His holiest claims, we are no more in the kingdom of truth and life, but belong to the kingdom of falsity and death, for all falsity is irrevocably doomed to perish. And this is sin, this conscious moral separation from God is sin. The spirit of man, breathed out by the Father of spirits, wilfully severs itself from its source, puts God aside from thought, ceases to recognise His presence, and His authority, becomes a law to itself, and is consciously governed by nothing higher than its own will. That is sin, in essence and in fact, the original, essential heart of sin. We may put it, and rightly put it in other words—we may conceive of it, as the choice of what is known to be wrong; or again, as the wilful abuse of moral liberty; or again, as the revolt of the human will from the sway of judgment, and conscience, and from truth, and right, and love. But the earliest, the deepest, the universal form of sin is voluntary separation from God, in thought and in heart.

Two great fundamental truths lie before us. On

the one side, the abiding and cherished sense of God, and of our relation to God, that is life, only that is life. On the other side, the want of the sense of God in the soul, voluntary separation from Him ; that is death, that is sin, the real root and cause of sin, the fountain of all evil to the spiritual nature. And what horrible and hideous outgrowths have sprung from this accursed germ, the history of the world, through all ages, shall reveal too clearly. We shudder at the atrocious crimes of individuals, and of nations ; we turn away, sick at heart, from the sweltering corruptions and abominations of our common humanity. But the deadliest evil of all, the primitive fountain of evil, is voluntary separation from God, the soul forgetting God, disowning God, obeying its own perverted will, and giving loose to all its own mere purposes, passions, and desires. There is nothing for the God-descended soul, no life, no light, no purity, no power, and no joy, except in God, in conscious and chosen union with God, the holy, loving God. All is wrong, and must be for ever wrong, so long as the first, and highest of all our relations is broken, disowned, unknown, and unfelt.

The essential nature of sin, if we have justly interpreted it, reveals its only antidote and method of cure. The one supreme end of spiritual pro-

vidence is to draw man back to God, to reconnect and reunite man with God. The true recovery of the soul to itself, to a sense of its being and its destiny ; the true subjugation of the revolted will, and the true renewal of moral liberty and moral power—all are contained and secured in the one design to restore God to His own world, and to His rightful place in the mind and heart of man. Hence the unveiling of light, the true light, that inward darkness might be quenched ; hence the enkindling of life, that moral death might be swallowed up of victory ; hence the revelation of love, that enmity might be pierced through and slain ; hence the manifested God, that men might see, and know, and feel, the Divine tenderness, and purity, and wisdom, and beauty, and grace, against which they had wickedly rebelled.

But the great purpose of spiritual providence, unlike God's designs in the material universe, could not be gained by force. Power, physical power, however vast, had nothing to do with it. The accursed fountain of evil in the soul, unutterably hateful to the Holy One as it was, could not be stopped and dried up except by a purely spiritual agency. The human will could not be forced, it might have been destroyed at any moment, it might have been annihilated, but abiding a faculty of the soul, God had so constituted it that force, physical force, had no relation to it

whatever. Man could not be compelled even by his Maker to love goodness and to choose obedience. In the midst of all Divine or other influences, whose potency is incalculable, man, constituted as he was, must choose, not another for him, perfectly freely, of his own will, he must make his choice. Spiritual providence could evolve itself in no way except through moral and spiritual agencies. Of necessity, unless the nature of the soul were destroyed, and every spiritual result rendered impossible, men must be left perfectly free, left to all the abominations and miseries into which the abuse of moral liberty, if they did abuse it, might drag them down. Of necessity sin, if they were determined to sin, must work itself out, in all possible forms; and all nations, all races, and all ages, must be suffered, if so they resolved, to riot in evil and in falsity, with their gods many, and their lords many, and their rites of blood, and their murderous wars, and their inhuman vices. But spiritual providence was not asleep, though only spiritual instruments and agencies could avail in conducting it. Everywhere, at every moment, with every people on the face of the earth, and with every successive age, the silent purpose of Heaven was ceaselessly at work. It would be fearfully dishonouring to imagine, that though for more than two thousand five hundred years after the apostasy the

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great, loving Father had been dealing in His mercy and His wisdom with the whole world, and acting on all nations and all times, He then, for thirteen hundred years, shut Himself up in Judea, forsaking all mankind besides. The more cruelly unjust to God is such a thought, when it is remembered, that since the advent of Christ He has again, for nearly two thousand years, made the whole earth His sphere.

Unquestionably there were special and great purposes, purposes which had a direct regard to the highest good of the entire world, to be served by the Jewish people. But the God of the Bible never was in any sense the God of the Jews only. He ever was the God of the Gentiles also. He is the Father of all souls, and He loveth the souls He hath made. His mighty purpose to draw man back to Himself has ever reigned, as it is reigning now, in all the earth and among all nations. That Holy Spirit, who strove so long with the generations of men before the flood, strove as ceaselessly, we cannot doubt, with the generations that followed. In spite of the resistance, and the obduracy, and the wickedness of His creatures, God's holy design, though we be utterly unable to distinguish and unfold its separate processes and modes of development, must have been ever advancing, in the most various and manifold ways, and

through means of the most various and manifold agencies, nearer, nearer to its fulfilment. All the needed preparations, of ten thousand kinds, which we cannot comprehend or conceive, must ever have been maturing in all lands, and through all ages, and all the possible instruments and influences must ever have been collecting and concentrating, whereby the last and perfect revelation of truth and love should be ushered in. It would amount to a denial of God, a denial of His wisdom and His foresight, to doubt that every race of men, and every successive age, had contributed, however unconsciously, and even in spite of themselves, contributed also in the best possible way, consistently with all other interests, to the furtherance of the highest good of the whole. Judea, for thirteen hundred years, had its own special and sacred office to fulfil, but not less really, though in far other modes, Phœnicians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, were workers for God in the evolutions of His mighty spiritual providence. All may be dark as midnight to us, when we attempt to expound what is so vast in the numbers it embraces, and in the time over which it stretches, what is besides so complicated, so interfused, and so hopelessly conflicting and contradictory. We may blunder egregiously in interpreting Heaven's plan in relation to different peoples and times. Our beautiful



theories, as to one idea, one great principle, or one particular truth, being wrought out by one race, and one age, and another by another, may be as flimsy as the gossamer web. But if always and everywhere, there has been a loving Father of men, and a Holy Ghost, who strives with human souls, though they resist and reject Him, it abides indubitable, that through all the ages, and over all the earth, God must have been working out the largest amount possible of highest good, preparatory to the final manifestation of Himself.

It dawned at length! Light, "The True Light," broke forth in a dark day. Life, "The Living One," was revealed; and there were some, eighteen hundred years ago, who were bold enough to affirm, "We have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, (that Eternally Living One,) which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> A wonderful reunion was to be organised, a mysterious but most real fellowship was to be instituted, and was already forming itself—God, and Christ, and men—God and men, through Christ, the holy medium.<sup>2</sup> The wicked, wilful separation from

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> See note on page 29.

God was doomed to come to an end, the cruel estrangement was to cease and be marvellously healed. God, banished from the thoughts and the hearts of men, Himself came down to earth to make peace, and to reconcile His children to their Father. Long and far away they had been wandering from Him, wandering in darkness, wandering on to death. But their Father loved them, had ever loved them, and in all the weary ages of separation had done everything for them which was possible, by His Providence and His Spirit; teaching, and warning, and punishing, and rebuking, and impelling, and restraining, and guiding, and remonstrating with them, so long as they would listen to His voice, and would suffer His merciful striving.

All the while, sin was only abhorrent to God, His unutterable, eternal abhorrence, and must not, and could not, be endured. In His mind and in the unalterable law of the universe, there could be nothing for sin but death, eternal death. In His mind and in the unalterable law of the universe, there could be no salvation for man, except from sin, not from its consequences merely, but first and chiefly and wholly from the damning root of evil itself. There was no alternative. Either man must die or sin must die, the one or the other—nothing else. Here is the profound mystery of redeeming, holy love. Man is

saved and sin perishes. The purpose is revealed in the fact. It is not a human thought or a human achievement, but a divine decree. Sin shall and must perish. A mortal blow shall be aimed at it in the soul, and it shall be slain and cast forth for ever. And this is not a purpose only or a prediction, but a history. In innumerable myriads of human souls, sin has been struck and pierced through and slain. "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? . . . . These are they which . . . . have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb."<sup>1</sup> "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, is cleansing us from all sin."<sup>2</sup> Redeeming dying love, is the mighty purifying power in this polluted world. How shall we chase darkness away, except by pouring in light? How shall deadly disease be stayed except by purifying and quickening the stream of life? How shall enmity be destroyed, except by the outbreathing of deeper love? How shall separation and estrangement be healed, except by bringing the estranged, somehow, face to face? Therefore, the Great Father drew near, very near, to His erring and sinful children.

If men will not return and inquire after God, God himself shall come down to seek and rescue them.

<sup>1</sup> Revelation vii. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John i. 7.

The Luminous, the Beautiful, the Holy, the Wise, the Loving, the Tender, the Gracious Being, shall unveil (and yet veil) Himself, in a human form. All that can be, shall be manifested through a finite medium, and laid open to the eye and to the soul of the world. Wisdom such as never fell from human lips shall distil like dew on the ear of men. Purity without a stain, without a breath to dim its perfect transparency, shall find its way to touch the guiltiest natures. Power which mortal arm never wielded, power seen even in the look of the countenance, power heard even in the tone of the voice, shall strangely bring down into the soul the awful feeling of a Divine presence. A gentleness, a patience, a meekness, a swelling, overflowing pity, and a sweetness, and graciousness, never found on earth before, shall tell yet more subduingly of God and heaven. Above all, that heart which never harboured one feeling of resentment or anger, which was loaded with sorrows all its own, and which besides, by a mysterious commiseration, bore the griefs and the sins of men within itself—that heart which was so truly alone, without intelligent sympathy in a single quarter, which had to endure misappreciation, ingratitude, treachery, rancorous hatred, and the vilest cruelty, and did so without a murmur—that heart which at last broke and burst in an agony, not of pain but of grief, and as it broke, cried out,

“ Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,” shall proclaim with piercing, passionate intensity, to the world and to all ages, what the invisible Father truly is, and shall lay open the very innermost nature of the Being from whom men had revolted, and who now besought them to return to His feet and to His heart. “ God in Christ is reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

This is the Divine method of piercing down to the deep root of sin. A real redemption can be achieved in no other way—can never be achieved until man, humbled and penitent, is restored to God, in heart, and soul, and life. Statesmen and philanthropists work nobly and beautifully on the surface of humanity, and many a sore mischief is cured, and many a healing influence is created, but the root beneath is untouched, and is as rank and strong as ever. Philosophy, and science, and literature, and art, are all enlightening, elevating, even purifying, but neither do they, or can they, touch the deadliest evil of all at its root. The crying want of the human soul is God, the living God. Darkness and death claim it as their own till it finds in God its light and life. Were God, and man’s relation to God, were the humble, loving, sense of God to become the central and informing soul of all knowledges and all studies, then philosophy would spring

into new life, and become at once more ennobling and more profound; science would become more luminous and more quickening; literature would catch a new glow and flush from the breath of Heaven, and be more enkindling and more beautiful; and art would be radiant with a sweeter, a holier, and a diviner grace. It is the most fatal of all mistakes to judge that the loving sense of God, a holy, redeeming God, in the soul, is like other mental possessions, one which we may have or may want indifferently. But this is an absolute necessity to our true being. If we are to live, really to live, not the animal, and not even the intellectual life, but the true soul life, the eternal life, we must be in God, in conscious and chosen union with God. Religion, so called, is not a separate department of human knowledge, a branch like other branches of human inquiry. It is rather the all-encompassing atmosphere, in which, whatever be our studies or our works, we can alone truly breathe and live, the one inspiring influence which alone puts a soul into our efforts, and gives them a Divine meaning. Religion is the sun of the whole inner nature, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, without which all is sterile, cold, and dark. And it is this sun which shines from the face and the cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and reveals in him a holy and reconciling God.

But let us not mistake. Not at Bethlehem, or on Calvary, for the first time did hope and salvation dawn on our world. The Eternal Logos, the true Light, that lighteth every man, was ever in the world from the beginning, sole medium<sup>1</sup> between God and men, and kindled many a precious ray, and lit up many a helpful, glittering star. There was a night before the day, there were stars before the sun arose, and even darkness had its worlds of light, that are unseen by day. In the long night of the world, many a weary pilgrim, travelling across the untried pathway, wandering on the mountains, with their deep ravines, their treacherous morasses, and their fatal precipices, lifted up his eyes and blessed God for the stars. He heard a voice within, and often a true voice without, from fellow-travellers like himself, and that Spirit from above, who never leaves human souls, so long as they will suffer His striving, guided him at last out of darkness, and error, and sin, into the land of light that never fades. God is light, God is life, luminous life and living light, the one fountain of all life and light, material or spiritual, in the universe. The soul itself is a Divine spark from the uncreated fire, and wherever there is a single glimmering ray, or a single feeble pulse of vitality, its only source is God. But light to the

<sup>1</sup> See note on page 29.

soul, and life to the soul, pre-eminently to the sinful soul, is love. There is no light like that which beams from loving eyes. There is no radiance, no quickening inspiration, like that which bathes the loving heart. Through love, light makes its way to the nature, suffuses, softens, subdues it, and wakens all its wealth of sweetness and of purity. The most luminous object in the universe, because the symbol of Infinite Mercy, is a dark cross. The truest source of life, because the divinest utterance of love, is a cruel death. The living Jesus, the dying Jesus, is the Redeemer of the world. God Incarnate, God *in* Christ, He is "the Life and Light of men."

THE END.

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